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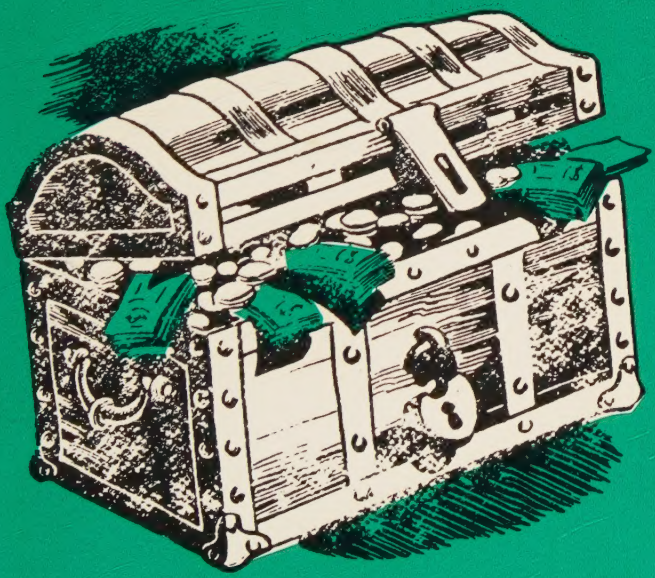
Jesus,
Luke 6:38

Seventeen Proven Sermons For Bringing Spiritual Renewal To The Local Church



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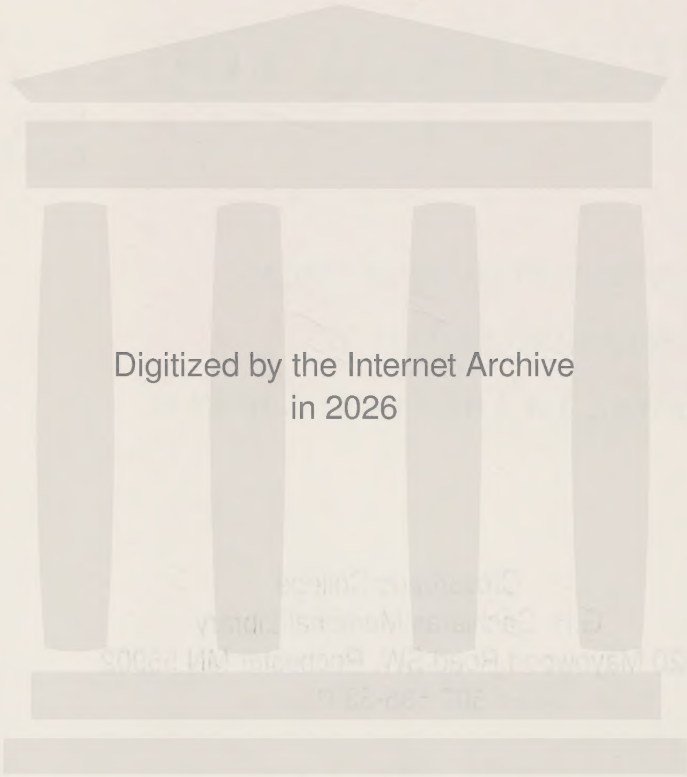
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"GIVE, AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN UNTO YOU..."

By

L. H. Coleman, Th.D.

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Dedication

TO MY CHRISTIAN PARENTS

WILLIAM EDGAR

AND

MAZIE DEAN COLEMAN

Whose love, devotion and encouragement still provide guidance and inspiration for Christian living.

Foreword

"I am pleased to recommend this book for preachers needing inspiration as they prepare a stewardship emphasis. Dr. Coleman's sermons are an overflow of his very heart and spirit. No other preacher has impacted my life in the area of stewardship more than Dr. L. H. Coleman. His leadership in one of my pastorates changed my life and understanding about God's plan for church financing."

-Reverend Charles Jones
Superintendent, West Texas Conference
of the Church of the Nazarene
Fort Worth, Texas

"This is a book you will use! It contains a wealth of excellent Biblical texts presented concisely and forcefully. I am not aware of another work available which duplicates it."

-Reverend Kyle Huber, Executive Pastor
Greentree Church
English Creek, New Jersey

"Thanks for providing a resource book for stewardship sermon ideas. Pastors are always on the look out for fresh ways to present the challenge of responsible stewardship. This volume will be very useful. In reviewing the book, I find the messages to be soundly biblical, very practical and homiletically friendly. Your experience in working stewardship campaigns in many churches has equipped you to offer sermons which have proven effective in local churches. I appreciate your emphasis on the fundamental principles of tithes, offerings and sacrifices -- it is hard to improve on the basics. Giving gimmicks are most often short lived."

-Dr. Charles Q. Carter, Pastor
First Baptist Church
Jonesboro, Georgia

Preface

Why write a book of messages concerning stewardship?

Actually this book has been written as a response to a real need. For the past fifteen years I have successfully conducted in twenty-nine states well over two hundred Capital Stewardship Programs among nineteen different denominations. Over and over again church leaders have asked me for sermon material in the area of stewardship. In a typical stewardship campaign in a local church ministers are asked to bring four stewardship messages in the three months of the intensive campaign and he simply cannot find much sermonic material on this very important subject.

Most pastors in planning a year's pulpit work will preach two or three messages on stewardship each year and many of them have asked me for material.

In response to the many requests I have mailed these ministers three or four of my messages on stewardship. The response to these messages has been one of great appreciation. Hence I have put these messages together in book form with the hope that a real need will be met.

I would like to give special thanks and express sincere appreciation for various ideas used in these messages but there is no way I could adequately single out certain individuals for credit and leave out other names. We all are part of all that we have met. Thus we put into our mental hoppers many thoughts, phrases and ideas that we might think are ours but in reality they originated with someone else. This certainly would be true with these messages.

I would like to express special appreciation first to my lovely wife of forty-six years, Anne Marie, whose encouragement is constant and steadfast. Second only to the Lord she keeps me singing and happy. Also I would like to express sincere appreciation to my secretary the past seven years, Kathryn Welch Smith, for her extra work with several rough drafts and finally the final draft.

The Bible quotes in the book are from the 1611 King James Version unless otherwise noted.

I trust that the ministers who use these messages for research for their own sermons will find something fresh and useable. I trust that laypersons who read them will be edified, encouraged, strengthened in the faith and inspired in their Christian pilgrimage.

All proceeds and profits from this book will go to Mack Kearney Ministries, which is involved in overseas evangelism.

L. H. Coleman

Table Of Contents

Page

Chapter One
"Hearts That Have Been Stirred"
Exodus 35:4-36:7 11

Chapter Two
"For Such A Time As This"
Esther 4:12-17 17

Chapter Three
"Is There An Ideal Time For A
Capital Stewardship Program?"
Ecclesiastes 11:4 23

Chapter Four
"A Sacrifice That Costs Me Nothing"
2 Samuel 24:1-25 29

Chapter Five
"The Call and Commitment of Moses"
Exodus 3:1-10 35

Chapter Six
"Misguided Priorities"
Luke 12:13-21 43

Chapter Seven
"A Living Sacrifice"
Romans 12:1,2 47

Chapter Eight
"Christian Generosity As Seen In The
Principle of Sowing and Reaping"
2 Corinthians 9:6,7 53

Chapter Nine
"The Deceitfulness of Riches"
Mark 4:19; Matthew 13:22 59

Chapter Ten
"The Challenge To Give Extravagantly"
Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:2-8 . . 65

Chapter Eleven
"More Than Enough"
Matthew 14:15-21; Mark 6:35-44;
Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14 71

Chapter Twelve
"The Grace of Giving"--2 Corinthians 8 and 9 . 77

Chapter Thirteen
"Godliness Or Griefs?"--1 Timothy 6:3-19 85

Chapter Fourteen
"The Law Of Giving"--Luke 6:38 93

Chapter Fifteen
"The Man Who Repented With His
Pocketbook"
Luke 19:1-10 99

Chapter Sixteen
"God's Tithe - The Minimum in Christian Giving"
Malachi 3:3-18 105

Chapter Seventeen
"Three Great Sacrifices"
Hebrews 13:15-16 113

Addendum:
Pithy Stewardship Statements 119

Chapter One

"HEARTS THAT HAVE BEEN STIRRED"

(The Problem of Giving Too Much)

Text: Exodus 35:4-36:7

Here we have a unique story. There is nothing like it in all the word of God. Have you ever been told, "Don't give any more money; we have more than enough?" I must confess I have never told this to a congregation and none of my minister friends have said such.

I. The People Are Commanded To Bring An Offering To The Lord. 35:4-9

Moses unequivocally gave to the people of Israel God's command to bring an offering for the building and furnishings of the Tabernacle (tent of meeting). Please note how specific the call for the offering was: gold, silver, bronze and other necessary items. Giving generously to the Lord is not optional. None of us is exempted from giving to the work of God. If God's people do not give, who will?

II. Their Hearts Were Stirred 35:21, 26:36:2

This is the part of the account that I like best. Who brought the Lord's offering? Those whose hearts were stirred. God is in the "hearts-stirred-up" business. He still is. God's people will not give willingly, gladly and

generously until and unless God moves inside their hearts and stirs them to action.

I am thinking of a Capital Stewardship Program I did in Texas years ago in which an M.D. and his wife were already giving 20% to the Lord through their church prior to the stewardship campaign. They prayed earnestly about their financial commitment. They agreed on the amount of giving $50,000 over the next three years over and above their present level of giving. This OB-GYN M.D. and his wife were not satisfied with that amount so they kept on praying. He said that it was like a light bulb turning on inside his mind and his heart being stirred inside to return to the delivery of babies which would add an additional $50,000 to their commitment making a total amount of $100,000. Later I heard his public testimony in which he stated that for the past 36 months he had given each month $3,000 over and above making a total amount given over the three years of $108,000. Yes, God had stirred up his heart!

I could give literally hundreds of examples similar to this one of folks who sought God's will in their giving and had a tender heart for God in the area of stewardship. They were interested in giving the maximum, giving up to their potential so that the work of God could go forward.

Has God stirred up your heart lately to give generously a sacrificial offering to Him? God will move upon our hearts to give if we'll seek His face and have a sincere desire to do His will.

III. They Had Willing Hearts. 35:21,22,29

If I understand both Old and New Testament giving we are to give willingly, joyously and not under duress,

pressure or grudgingly. If we can't give with willing and cheerful hearts then we should not give at all. God loves a cheerful giver because God himself is a cheerful Giver. Jesus even faced the cross joyfully. **Hebrews 12:2** states, **"...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."** We are to serve the Lord with gladness **(cf. Psalm 100:2)**. This includes our giving.

The Israelites wanted a place of worship; so they gave with willing hearts.

IV. They Were People Of Wisdom. 35:10,25,26; 36:1-3,8

True wisdom is from God. The Bible in general and the book of Proverbs in particular places a great premium on wisdom (please read **Proverbs 1:7; 2:6; 3:13; 4:5,7; 9:10; 14:33; 16:16; 17:24; 19:8; 24:7**). Is it wise to give generously to the Lord? This proves the sincerity of our love for God. It is an act of faith and obedience. The wise believer is a generous giver.

According to **Exodus 36:1,2** God was the one who was the giver and source of the wisdom exercised by the people of God at this time.

If wise believers give generously then only foolish believers hold back in the exercise of their stewardship. Wisdom dictates generous giving. Are you wise? Are you wise enough to put yourself in a position to receive God's blessings by giving generously to Him? It is smart to obey God. Please never forget this great principle!

V. They Gave Every Morning. 36:3

Isn't it great when people can't wait until the Lord's Day

to bring their freewill offerings to the Lord? The Israelites gave so joyfully that it resulted in daily giving. We are to give with hilarity. We are to give with excitement. Isn't it exciting when you are a part of a church where the people give in an electrifying way?

Yes, the Israelites in **36:6** gave every morning. Please note the word "**every**". If you are a baseball fan you can remember certain players from your favorite team with a hitting streak going. You keep up with each game to see if the player keeps the hitting streak alive. There's more excitement than that in God's house when God's people get so "turned on" that they bring their freewill offerings to God EVERY morning. They want to keep the streak alive.

VI. The Bible Records God's Most Unusual Commandment: QUIT GIVING! 36:5-7

You almost have to read these three verses twice, maybe three or four times. Maybe this is the only time in history this phenomenon occurred.

The craftsmen who were working on the building of the sanctuary told Moses that the people had already given **"much more than enough" (36:5)**. What a victory service! What a report to bring to God's great leader, Moses! Please take note that Moses did not faint. He received their report calmly.

Verse 6 states the most unusual commandment in all the Bible. Moses did not give a request. He issued a commandment: **"Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary" (36:6) (NKJV).** This verse states, **"And the people were restrained from bringing" (36:6b) (NKJV).** The

craftsmen had an overage of materials. What a response!

Do you know of any counterparts to this action today? I confess I do not.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to be in a building program and hear the minister say, **"Give no more; we have enough money for the project, even more than enough".**

CONCLUSION:

These Israelites have given the world an example or Exhibit A of how and how much to give. The thing that stands out in the story more than anything else is the fact that God stirred up their hearts to give. Giving begins in the heart. Giving begins within. When a person's heart is right, the giving will take care of itself. Yes, there will be more than enough if all of us would follow the example given in these two chapters of Exodus!

Chapter Two

"FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS"

Text: Esther 4:12-17

Many scholars are quick to point out that the book of Esther is the only book in the entire Bible where the name of God does not appear. Although this is a unique feature of the book, we must point out that God's sovereignty, providential care, wisdom and overwhelming power are highlighted in this little book.

I. The Opposition.

The book begins with King Ahasuerus (or Xerxes I), king of Persia from 486-465 B.C. dethroning Queen Vashti. She disobeyed one of his commands, acting on principle, and was thereby quickly deposed from power and prominence. A "beauty contest" followed in which Esther won over her worthy competitors. This placed Esther in a unique position.

The story involves Mordecai, Esther's uncle, who raised her after she became an orphan. Mordecai orchestrated the idea of Esther's becoming a candidate for queen. Mordecai in **2:19-23** uncovered a plot to assassinate the king and the villains were caught and executed. The king at the time did not know that Mordecai became the informant that saved the life of the king.

Later Haman promoted a conspiracy which resulted in a decree from the king to destroy all of the Jews. Truly Haman was a man of great treachery. When Mordecai learned of the plot he stirred the Jewish community to action. **"And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes" (Esther 4:3) (NKJV).**

II. The Option.

Esther was faced with an option. Mordecai spelled out the option in great detail to the young queen. The only hope was for Esther to plead for mercy to the powerful king. **"And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: 'Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews'" (Esther 4:13) (NKJV).** In other words Mordecai reminded Esther that she and all the other Jews were in a life and death struggle. Certainly Esther wanted to survive but she also wanted all her people to live as well. What would she do with the option before her?

III. The Opportunity.

Esther had a golden opportunity. She could possibly save the Jewish nation during this era. The interesting thing to consider is that Esther had to take a calculated risk. Suppose the king would not give her entrance? Suppose he refused to see her? Her very life was at stake. The king had the power to have Esther killed as she approached his presence. Esther said, **"And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" (Esther 4:16) (NJKV).**

Mordecai made some important points in his talk with Esther. He indicated to her, **"For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place" (Esther 4:14) (NKJV)**. Esther had an opportunity to be used of God. Mordecai told Esther that if she did not plead the case for the Jews then God would use another person. We need to be aware that often we have opportunities to serve God uniquely. God's work <u>WILL</u> go forward with or without our help. If we don't teach a certain Bible class someone else will. If we don't perform a certain function in our church someone else will. If we don't give sacrificially in a Capital Stewardship Program someone else will. However, we will miss the blessing!

Also Mordecai told Esther, **"Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14) (NJKV)**. This is a pungent thought. God put Esther on the scene at this particular point in time in order to give her a golden opportunity to do the will of God. Circumstances are not an accident for the believer. God's word teaches us, **"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way" (Psalms 37:23) (NKJV)**. Nothing in our lives happens by accident or coincidence. God permits those things to happen. At times this is very difficult to understand. One fact is clear -- God is sovereign. We should not question His actions.

Psalms 37:23 does not imply fatalism or rigid predestination. Who fully understands all the implications of the doctrine of predestination? **Psalms 37:23** certainly does not negate the fact that man is a free moral agent, free to make life's choices. The factor that comes into focus is

the mighty truth that is contained in **Romans 8:28**. For the believer all things actually work together for the good of the believer according to God's definition of the word "good". Job is a classic example of God's giving permission for Satan to do harm to Job's health, and take away his children to material possessions. God proved His point. Job would be a faithful servant of the Lord even if his health and wealth were taken away. Job would serve God even for "naught" **(cf. Job 1:9)**. Job would have strong faith in the Lord regardless of life's circumstances.

The important point here is that Esther had a golden opportunity to serve God through a unique group of circumstances. These circumstances were not mere coincident or happenstance.

Esther had this once in a lifetime opportunity to act courageously for the Lord. She would never have this set of circumstances to present itself again. She had been placed in the role of queen at this time in order that she could plead for the very lives of the Jewish people. She acted courageously, decisively and effectively. As she went in to lay out her case to the king the Jewish people were fasting and praying.

IV. The Order.

What was King Ahasuerus' response to Esther's plea? First of all he permitted her to see him. **"She obtained favor in his sight" (Esther 5:2).** After he extended the sceptre to her he stated that her request would be granted **"to the half of the kingdom" (Esther 5:3)**. Esther at the first banquet asked the king to have another banquet in which Haman would be invited. Prior to the second banquet Haman had prepared the gallows for the hanging

of Mordecai. At this second banquet Esther made her request to the king. She told of the conspiracy and plot to have the Jews exterminated. On the night prior to the banquet the king upon examining **"the book of records of the chronicles" (Esther 6:1)** discovered that Mordecai had saved the king's life and had never been properly rewarded. Prior to the banquet the king visited with Haman and asked him, **"What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" (Esther 6:6)**. Haman, thinking the king was referring to himself, stated that a public recognition and parade should take place. The king then told Haman that he wanted Mordecai so honored.

V. The Outcome.

As already indicated at the banquet Esther laid her request before the king and exposed Haman and his crimes. Swiftly the king ordered that Haman was to be hung on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. This was a case of Haman's being caught in his own noose. Upon Haman's execution Esther asked the king to reverse the order to kill all the Jews. He agreed, issued a decree and great celebration followed in the Jewish communities.

Thus the Jewish people were saved by the timely counsel of Mordecai and the urgent request of Esther. In order perpetually to remember this great event a special two day feast called **"the Feast of Purim"** was inaugurated and is celebrated annually by Jewish people until this day. This special occasion is marked by gladness and joy for the Jewish deliverance through the providential care of God.

CONCLUSION:

The Feast of Purim is a continual reminder of the heroism and courage of Queen Esther in risking her throne and life to save her people. She was truly God's instrument for deliverance.

What about our heroics for God today? God has brought us to this appointed place and time because He has confidence in us that we will accomplish the will of God.

Is your life truly counting for God?

Is your life and mine being used by God to accomplish His purpose for our lives?

Chapter Three

"IS THERE AN IDEAL TIME FOR A CAPITAL STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM?"

Text: Ecclesiastes 11:4

"He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap."

This message is amazingly practical. The background of this passage is agrarian. Farming was a principal occupation in Old Testament times as well as the first century of Jesus' day. Jesus used agrarian terms quite often. He talked about the wheat and the tares. He presented eternal truths in the parable of the sower. He cursed the barren fig tree and instructed his disciples to have the faith of a tiny mustard seed.

What does Solomon tell us in the text? He states that there is never an ideal time for the farmer to plant seed in the spring nor is there an ideal time for him to harvest his crop in the fall. There is always something wrong with the soil, wind, rainfall or climate. The soil is either too hard or too soft. The weather is too hot or too cold. The weather forecast is usually unreliable.

The bottom line is that if a farmer waited until conditions were perfect or ideal he would never plant his crop. A farmer was telling me how he would try to guess when the last good frost would hit and try to plant his seed and "slip it in" just after the last frost. He said he would be 90% effective.

Another farmer told me about the year he planted his cotton crop and the rains came and flooded his fields so badly that he lost his entire crop. He said that he went twenty miles away to confer with his father. They talked and talked at length. His father's situation was identical. They debated about what course of action they should take. His father told him that when he was a teenager a similar thing occurred and his father made the decision to replant. He said the wise thing to do was to wait until the soil dried out enough to rework the soil and plant again. The crop would be so late that the harvest would come in late fall but it was worth a chance. My farmer friend said that he followed his father's advice, replanted and had one of the finest crops ever.

Likewise if the farmer waits until conditions are ideal he will never harvest his crops. The text states, **"... he that regardeth the wind shall not reap"**.

So it is with conducting a Capital Stewardship Program. If a congregation is waiting until the time is ideal it will never have a capital gifts campaign. If a church waits until economic conditions are ideal she will never have a Capital Stewardship Program. The church would never build or expand. There would never be remodeling or refurbishing. Inflation, unemployment, interest rates and other economic factors affect different persons in different ways. One person wants interest rates high while another wants the rates lower. Economic conditions are fragile and fluctuate at best. There has never been an ideal time to raise church funds.

This same principle applies to individuals and/or families who enter into a Capital Stewardship Program. One family will have kids in college the next three years. Another family just purchased a new home and is financially in a bind. Another family has accumulated burdensome medical bills. There is

always something that claims our financial attention, always a financial problem of some kind. There's never enough money in the family budget. We never seemingly reach all our financial goals. Some problem will put us to the test.

There are other illustrations of this same truth and principle:

1. For some there is never an ideal time to go to college or continue one's graduate studies because we have too much debt and/or too little cash. We are reluctant to go into debt. How much is too much debt?
2. For some there is never an ideal time to enter the work force. Factors such as supply and demand in certain fields,such as engineering, computer science, teaching, etc. must be considered.
3. What about an ideal time to enter into matrimony? Fear grips most young people who contemplate getting married. I married at the ripe old age of 19. I was a senior in college earning the fabulous sum of $45 per week with no savings account nor any appreciable assets of any variety. Economically I had no business getting married. But so what? What if I had very little of this world's goods? I was madly in love. I followed Paul's injunction **"For it is better to marry than to burn" (I Corinthians 7:9).** This verse means that it is better to marry than to burn up with passion. After having been very happily married for forty-six years, what would I have done differently? I would have married three months earlier at the beginning of the semester instead of the middle of the fall school term! If I had waited until all the conditions were ideal I probably never would have married.
4. For most of us there is never an ideal time to begin a family. Times are tough for most young married couples. Buying furniture and appliances as well as paying rent or

house payments is not easy. If my wife and I had waited until conditions were ideal we would never have had any children. However thank God for our children and especially our grandchildren! Amen!

5. For most there is never an ideal time to purchase their first home or their first new car. You must guess whether mortgage or interest rates will rise or fall. Conditions are never ideal for such purchases.
6. For most there is never an ideal time for major surgery. It matters not what your financial condition is; if you need surgery, you need surgery! Most of us have the surgery and figure out a way later on to pay for it. Surgery causes us to reschedule many things such as our work, vacations and other things.
7. For most there is never an ideal time to retire. Ninety percent of all Americans have prepared inadequately for the years of retirement. Most just do their best and try not to worry about the rest.

How can we make application spiritually of this great text?

I. Put your strong faith in Christ and go forward.

We must "bite the bullet" as it were. We must launch out in faith, launch out into the deep waters. Push away from the shoreline.

When Abraham left the Ur of the Chaldees to follow God's will he walked by faith. When Noah built the ark he was moved and motivated by strong faith. When Moses confronted Pharaoh he expressed faith.

When Paul went forth on his three great missionary journeys he put his strong faith into action.

This is what we must do in our individual lives. Proceed with your building program. Expand. Enlarge. Use Wisdom. Plan wisely then proceed with abundant faith.

II. Acknowledge that we need God's help.

A great truth to remember as we proceed through enduring faith is that "(his) strength is made perfect in (our) weakness" **(II Corinthians 12:9).** Give God a chance to do a work of grace in your life. When I was a senior minister I was so appreciative of those folks when asked to teach a Bible class or take on a significant assignment in the church would reply, "But I feel so inadequate. Do you think I can do this?" My answer always was, "God is looking for folks who feel inadequate and unworthy. Depend on God completely. He will assist you beyond measure. Remember His strength will be made perfect in your weakness."

III. By going against the odds and talking a step of faith God will get the credit for the victory that will be accomplished.

If we went forth in God's work in our own strength and felt adequate for the task we could gloat and glory over our great spiritual accomplishments. We need God's power to accomplish great tasks for God.

God deserves all the credit for all of our spiritual victories. **"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57).**

CONCLUSION:

Conditions are not now nor will they ever be ideal for entering into a Capital Stewardship Program in your church. We must have such vision that we will not perish as a church. Remember the seven last words of a dying church: "We never did it this way before."

This is a time for faith and action.

"Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord our God shall be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9 (NKJV).

Chapter Four

"A SACRIFICE THAT COSTS ME NOTHING"

Text: 2 Samuel 24:1-25

The last chapter of **2 Samuel** records some interesting events in the life of King David. David's life, like most of us, had its high and low points. Although David in his life committed some of the greatest sins, he nevertheless was a man after God's own heart. This chapter gives us an insight into David's all-consuming love for God.

Let us take a look at the background of our scripture passage under consideration at this time. God's anger was definitely upon David because he put too much importance upon military power. He put his confidence in human strength and power as he asked Joab to number his military forces. Reluctantly Joab carried out the wishes of the king taking almost a year in the process and reported an army of 800,000 in the northern part of Israel and 500,000 in southern Israel (**2 Samuel 24:9**). David would have been well served to have heeded his own words: **"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God" (Psalm 20:7).**

David acknowledged his sin before God. **"And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly."**

(24:10). David had to pay a price for his sin. God through the prophet Gad gave David a choice of three possible punishments:

(1) Seven years of famine

(2) Three months of being routed by his enemies

(3) Three days of pestilence

David then threw himself upon the mercies of God. God sent the pestilence as punishment. This resulted in the death of 70,000 men **(24:15)**. The death angel was going to destroy Jerusalem next but God relented and stated, **"It is enough" (24:16).**

Next Gad the prophet instructed David to build an altar and offer sacrifices in worship to the Lord. David quickly obeyed. David never wavered from wanting to worship the Lord. As the sweet singer of Israel he delighted in offering praise to the Lord God of Israel.

David wanted to offer his sacrifices on the threshingfloor of Araunah. Upon learning of David's desire Araunah bowed before the king and offered to donate the threshingfloor to the king. Here's where the story takes on significance in stewardship.

I. Note the <u>CONVICTION</u> of King David.

David refused Araunah's gift. David had a deep conviction in his heart when he stated, **"...neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing" (24:24).**

David believed deeply that his offering to God should be **(1)** Valued **(2)** Voluntary **(3)** Visible and **(4)** Victorious.

Why did David refuse to offer to God that which costs him nothing? He felt that he heard the voice of God speaking to his soul. He would not pay his vows by proxy.

He would not ride in on someone else's coattails. He accepted his own accountability to God. He wanted the gift to be his, not something from someone else's labors. Money represents stored up self. Money represents time, talents and work involved. Thus David paid Araunah fifty shekels of silver for the threshing-floor and thereby his gifts to Almighty God represented the labor of his own hands.

How grateful to God we are for David's acting upon the courage of his convictions.

II. Note the <u>CORRECTNESS</u> of David.

David was absolutely correct in his convictions, in his theology and in his thinking. He calculated calmly, confidently and correctly. His logic was that a gift of worship should come from his own purse and represent his own personality and personal labors. If he had offered something owned by someone else he would have been robbed of the personal pleasure of giving unto God something of real value from his perspective. He wanted to offer his own gift or, if you please, give fifty shekels of silver from his own pocket and purse to the Lord as an act of worship.

Statistics indicate that in a typical evangelical church in America 20% of the people give 80% of the money, 30% give the other 20% and 50% give nothing of record. Half of America's church members give **NOTHING** to God in tithes and offerings!!! How shocking!! Of course these same 50% seldom attend worship services. This means that a typical church could give up half its members and they would never miss them and after a few weeks those who received them would not even know they had them.

Jesus died for our sins. Jesus gave His life at Calvary for our redemption. Isn't it strange that half of our church members show their appreciation for Christ's finished work at Calvary by offering to Him in tithes and offering as an act of worship absolutely nothing/zero!! How tragic! How superficial! What a farce!

III. Next please note the <u>CONCLUSION</u> of David's gift.

The conclusion is stated in the last verse of this chapter under discussion: **"So the Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel (24:25).** David repented. He recognized his wrong actions before God. David received forgiveness. David worshipped. He not only offered up burnt offerings which was his original intent; he also offered up peace offerings. He doubled or intensified his worship and sacrifices. He followed through on his commitment.

God accepted his worship. He worshipped in the right spirit. Oh that God would accept our worship each time we enter into His sanctuary for the purpose of worship! We must have the right attitude, the attitude of gratitude. We must have "clean hands and a pure hearts" **(Psa. 24:4)**. We must be right before God. Our motives should be pure. We make a sad mistake by believing that we can fake out or trick God like we treat people. We doubletalk before people but this will not be acceptable to God as we deal with Him and above all as He deals with us.

The conclusion of David's gifts was one of victory, vindication and joy. Please go back in your Bible and read **II Chronicles 7:14**. How appropriate in light of today's study.

God help us to offer unto the Lord something of worth and value, something of meaning and significance. We cannot afford to be flippant or casual in what we offer unto the Lord. We should give sacrificially to God. This would mean offering to God a gift that would change our lifestyle, giving something that would rearrange our priorities so that we put God first in our lives and a gift involving giving up something.

Instead of giving God a gift or sacrifice that costs us nothing, we must offer to God something that costs us **plenty**. Amen and Amen!

Chapter Five

"THE CALL AND COMMITMENT OF MOSES"

Text: Exodus 3:1-10

One of the great stories in the Bible is the call, commitment and challenge of Moses. Moses is credited with writing the first five books in the Old Testament which we call the Pentateuch. He is referred to over and over again in the New Testament. He is the greatest figure in all the Old Testament. He became the lawgiver, deliverer of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, great author and Israel's greatest statesman.

The crucial point in Moses' life was receiving and responding affirmatively to God's call at age eighty.

I. The Plight.

Please take a look at the **plight** of Moses and Israel. Moses became a fugitive in Egypt at age forty. The story of baby Moses being rescued from an ark (basket) hid in the bulrushes is a story of God's providential care. Moses spent his early years in Pharaoh's palace in Egypt in a position of privilege. At age forty Moses, wanting to be identified with the Hebrews, killed an Egyptian. Fearing the worst, Moses fled and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He spent the next forty years on the backside of the desert of Midian. He had learned desert survival and had prepared himself for about forty years of

wilderness wanderings. Midian was probably located in Arabia, east of the Gulf of Aqaba. Some scholars place it in the Sinai peninsula.

Moses' plight was being a fugitive in a far away desert where he might have thought that God had perhaps forgotten about him.

Next please note the plight of the Israelites. They were in bondage in Egypt. **Exodus 2:23** states, **"Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage" (NKJV).** They cried out to their God for help. What was God's response? **"So God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exodus 2:24) (NKJV).** God said, **"So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians" (Exodus 3:8) (NKJV).** God needed a leader. He called Moses to a great task of leading the people of Israel out of their bondage.

II. <u>The</u> <u>Sight</u>.

This leads us to the next part of the story, the **<u>sight</u>**. Moses saw a bush aglow but it was not consumed. What was Moses' response?" **"Then Moses said, 'I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn'" (Exodus 3:3) (NKJV).** As he turned aside to see this unusual sight God spoke to him and called his name twice. God commanded him to remove his sandals because the place on which he stood was holy ground. Have you been on any hold ground lately? Has God spoken to you lately? If so, what did He say? We all need to have a burning bush experience similar to the one Moses had. We need to get a word from the Lord and follow His will for our lives.

III. The Blight.

The next part of the story involved four excuses from Moses in answer to God's call to go to Egypt and lead God's chosen people out of their bondage. So we now should take a look at the **blight** in the form of these excuses.

1. **"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11) (NKJV).** God told Moses, **"I will certainly be with you" (Exodus 3:12) (NKJV).** What greater promise could God give us than this? We all need to be reassured from time to time of God's presence, protection and provision in our lives.
2. **"And they say to me, 'What is his name?' What shall I say to them?" (Exodus 3:13) (NKJV).** God certainly had a ready answer. His identification was clear and unmistakable. The answer should be given, **"I AM WHO I AM" (NKJV).** God is the great **"I AM".** He is the One who always has been, the One who always is and the One who always will be. He is the unchangeable ruler of the universe. He is the great cause of the universe. He is the unmoved mover of everything.
3. **"But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you'" (Exodus 4:1) (NKJV).**
   At this point God allowed Moses to perform three great miracles:
   (1) the rod turned into a serpent
   (2) leprous hand from his bosom
   (3) water turned into blood
   God gave to Moses these miracles to prove His mighty

power and also to give credibility to Moses' ministry. Isn't it wonderful to see God's great power at work?

4. **"O my Lord, I am not eloquent... but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue" (Exodus 4:10) (NKJV).** The Lord gave to Moses his brother, Aaron, as his mouthpiece. Actually God did not accept this last excuse. **Exodus 4:14** states, **"So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses" (NKJV).** In other words God was ready for Moses to trade in his excuses for positive action. It was time now to get on with the task and throw aside his excuses.

IV. The Fight.

Next came the confrontation or "fight" with Pharaoh. Note that it was really God vs. Pharaoh more than Moses vs. Pharaoh because God was the Person who was really in control.

The big problem for Moses was Pharaoh's utter disdain for the things of God. He was indifferent to anything spiritual. Thus, when Moses confronted Pharaoh and asked for the Israelites to be released from bondage, he met stiff, stern resistance. Moses' plea to Pharaoh was, **"Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness" (Exodus 5:1).** What was Pharaoh's reply? **"I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2).** Pharaoh ordered the Israelites back to work and made their work much harder. Pharaoh stated, **"Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves" (Exodus 5:7).** Their quota of bricks was not diminished. The officers of the Israelites also were physically punished **(cf. Exodus 5:14ff).** Moses sought counsel and guidance

from the Lord. God reminded Moses that He was well aware of the situation and would come to their aid. God said, **"And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians" (Exodus 6:7).**

The Lord then did signs and wonders through Moses. The ten plagues followed. The tenth plague was the death of the first-born son. We are all familiar with the Passover. The Israelites sprinkled blood of a lamb without blemish on the doorposts and lintels and the death angel passed over them and spared them. This became well known later as the Passover feast, a holy day for the Hebrews.

V. <u>The</u> <u>Flight</u>.

Thus God led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. God did mighty works, signs, wonders and miracles so that the Israelites took **<u>flight</u>** from Egypt. God orchestrated the entire event. The children of Israel fled Egypt amid confusion and frustration on the part of Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

VI. <u>The</u> <u>Might</u>.

Please take note that God furnished the **<u>might</u>** for the flight from Egypt. God took credit for what happened. God in his mighty power rolled back the Red Sea and the Israelites escaped the wrath of Pharaoh's army. After the Israelites crossed over to the other side of the Red Sea, God closed the Sea back and Pharaoh's army was drowned. God's mighty hand was at work again.

Then for the next thirty-eight plus years, God led the

Israelites via a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night **(cf. Exodus 13:21ff)**. God's presence and provision was perfect and providential for His people. He led them all the way. Later, after wilderness wanderings, Joshua would lead them into the land of promise, the land of Canaan.

CONCLUSION:

What can we learn from the call and ministry of Moses?

First, we need to have a genuine experience with God. It does not matter <u>how</u> God speaks to each of us as long as He speaks and we listen. He spoke to Samuel through a still, small voice. He spoke to Mary and Joseph through an angel. He spoke to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road with a voice and bright light. He spoke to Martin Luther through a thunderstorm. He has spoken to many while in a foxhole in war. Sometimes He speaks through a friend, parent or church leader. God will speak to us in different ways. We need to listen. Then we need to respond affirmatively.

Secondly, we need to be willing to be used of God. Moses answered God's call reluctantly but he answered "yes". He did go to Pharaoh as a spokesman for God. We need to become a spokesperson for God.

Thirdly, we need to carry out God's will for our lives. God has a blueprint for every life. God used 80 years in the life of Moses to prepare him for the next 40. Moses had not done anything of great significance for God during

the first two- thirds of his life. But, oh how he was mightily used by the Lord the last part of his life!

People have long since forgotten the name of the powerful Egyptian king but the world is still in awe at the accomplishments and achievements of Moses.

Fourthly, if you are in a Capital Stewardship Program in your church ask God to lead and guide you in how your financial commitment will relate to the future growth of your church. Do the big thing for God like Moses did!

Chapter Six

"MISGUIDED PRIORITIES"

Text: Luke 12:13-21

This is one of Christ's more familiar parables. This is the story of a rich man with misguided priorities. This particular man had a stewardship problem. He thought his material possessions were his. He had failed to learn the primary fact of stewardship: God's ownership. God owns everything. We are only stewards and manage the affairs given to us by our Owner.

1. **First, please note <u>blessings</u> <u>abundant</u>.**

   The story indicates that this man was truly blessed. His land yielded abundant crops. He was a most successful farmer.

   Some of the folks in our churches who could help the Lord's work materially in such a great way are selfish, greedy and serve the god of material possessions. If they only could grasp the joy of giving and sharing! Think how God's work could be blessed if certain people of wealth would only practice biblical stewardship.

2. **His <u>barns</u> were <u>full</u> to capacity.**

   This man was so prosperous that he had a perplexing problem: **"What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" (Luke 12:17)**

   His dilemma was: shall I limit my agricultural pursuits, cut back on production or expand? He decided to expand.

There was nothing wrong with his ambition or wanting to be the country's leader in agribusiness. From a business perspective he was on track.

3. **Next, please note his building plans.**

The farmer stated, **"I will pull down my barns, and build greater" (v. 18)**. He should have given attention to building his life and character. He would have been wise to have built a great relationship with Jesus Christ. Instead he concentrated on building a great financial empire. His entire life was epitomized by his pride in his barns. Probably his favorite expression was, "You should have seen this farm when only the Lord had it." He was guilty of the "my" syndrome. Five times he used the word "my": **my fruits (v. 17); my barns, my fruits, my goods (v. 18); my soul (v. 19).**

Today we are a "monogram" society. We put our initials on our cuffs, shirt pockets, etc. We are proud of what we "own". Note the great pride this farmer had in "his" barns.

4. **The farmer was then blindsided by God.**

Just as the farmer was in the process of executing his building plans, God spoke to him some earth-shaking, life-threatening, awesome words. God said, **"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee " (v. 20).** God informed him that soon his name would find its way into the obituary column. For him, this would be "curtains". The rich man was totally unprepared for death. His philosophy was, **"I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (v.19)**. His "merry" times were about to come to an abrupt halt.

Life is brief. Life is uncertain. Death is sure. Thus we should be prepared for the inevitable. Go look at today's newspaper. If you live in a big city you will see death notices for all ages. No one has any promise of tomorrow.

This man failed in the stewardship of life itself. With his God-given life he was a poor steward.

5. **Next, God asked a <u>bold</u> <u>question</u>?**

Following the death announcement, the Lord asked a searching, penetrating, bold question: **"...then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (v. 20).** This is one of the most searching questions ever asked by the Lord. This rich farmer honestly thought "those things" were his. After all he had worked hard on the farm. He had produced with God's help some bountiful crops. His toil, perspiration and tears had gone into making this into a model farm. Probably he had been given "the Farmer of the Year" award by the county agent or farmers' association of Israel.

The hard reality was simply that the corn, barley, oats, hay and other crops were his for only a brief time. God actually owns it all. He owns the land, the cattle, the crops, everything!

All that for which he worked hard he did not need; all that he needed he did not have. He had bulging barns and a battered soul. His storage problem was being solved, but his soul problem remained unsolved.

This man had abundance and poverty at the same time. While he had an abundance in material possessions he had poverty in the spiritual realm. After all the spiritual is the all important part of life.

6. **Last, look at the bottom line.**

The bottom line spelled doom, damnation and destruction. His epitaph was one he had heard from God: "Thou Fool."

Imagine living a life which by the world's standards was very successful and having a philosophy of "eat, drink and be merry" only to be told by God, "**Thou Fool**".

Yes, here we have a case of misguided priorities. His priority had been making money and not making a life. He built a successful business but bungled the question of where he would spend eternity.

Jesus once said, **"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26)**.

Jesus gave us the bottom line in a two-fold sense in verse 21:

(1) He had laid up **"treasure for himself"**.

(2) He was not **"rich toward God"**.

Christ instructed us to **"lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matt. 6:20) (NKJV)**. In the next verse of this passage in Matthew 6, Jesus stated, **"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (NKJV)**. The heart follows after one's treasure. Our priority should be toward spiritual riches. As pleasing God becomes our primary priority in the pursuit of life we become "rich toward God."

Make sure you take your time, treasure and talents to the right storehouse - God's house.

Where is your treasure?

What are your real priorities in life?

Chapter Seven

"A LIVING SACRIFICE"

Text: Romans 12:1,2

My favorite stewardship text in all the Bible is this very passage. The only mention of a **"living sacrifice"** in all the Bible is found in **Romans 12:1**. The path to fruitful and productive stewardship is found in being a **"living sacrifice"**.

This passage is so rich in spiritual significance that every word and phrase deserves attention.

Please note the little word **"therefore"**. **Romans 12** is predicated upon all that Paul had said previously. **"Therefore"** refers back to what Paul said in **Romans 1-11** in which Paul discussed two great doctrines: **the doctrines of sin and salvation**. Paul concluded that all, Jew and Gentile alike, were guilty sinners before God and in need of redemption in Christ. **"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).** The doctrine of salvation is summarized in the following verses:

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

In this passage in **Romans 12** Paul is talking about sanctification or dedication to God. Thus he is making application of the two doctrines previously discussed.

Paul begins the passage with a plea, **"I beseech you"** or **"I plead with you"**.

The motivation for being a living sacrifice is also mentioned in verse one. **"The mercies of God"** forms the backdrop or motivation needed to lay our lives on the altar for Christ. Please take a look at **Lamentations 3:23,23** for an insight into God's mercies: **"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness"**. If we can't be motivated by the mercies of God our motivator needs to be sent to the shop for repairs. God needs to work on our hearts and correct the problem.

Next, please note that as a living sacrifice we are to be **"holy"**. This word scares most of us. The word basically means to be **"set apart"**. Negatively, we are to be separated from sin. Positively we are to be dedicated, offered up, unto God. We use the word holy more than we realize. For example we are holding in our hands the **"Holy"** Bible. This book is vastly different from all others. It is set apart from the rest. God authored it. **"Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21) (NKJV)**. We are to be **"a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people" (1 Pet. 2:9) (NKJV)**.

Next please note the phrases **"acceptable unto God"**. As a living sacrifice we are to be acceptable by God. Do you realize that not all of our worship is acceptable to God? For example Cain and Abel made offerings to God. God accepted Abel's sacrifice or offering but rejected Cain's because it was offered in the wrong spirit and it lacked proper faith. Our service to God must meet with His approval.

Next please note the phrase, **"which is your reasonable service"**. This means **"our spiritual service"** or **"logical**

ministry". There is nothing unreasonable about giving our all to Christ when we think of God's purchase of our salvation in Jesus' death on the cross. Christ has given us far, far more than we will ever be able to return back to Him.

Also we are not to be **"conformed to this world" (V. 2)**. In other words we should not let the world squeeze us into its mold. We are to be "transformed" to the world. The world is going in one direction and Christians are to be traveling in the opposite direction. Our minds should thus be **"renewed" (v. 2)**. They need to be jump-started by the Holy Spirit. We ought to think the way Christ thinks.

Please note the reference in verse two to the **"will of God"**. George W. Truett once said, **"The greatest discovery in life is finding the will of God. The greatest achievement in life is doing the will of God."**

The goal of a church's Capital Stewardship Program is to discover and do God's will in the area of Christian stewardship.

How can we be a living sacrifice?

What exactly does it mean to be a living sacrifice?

I. It means living our lives under the <u>lordship</u> of Christ.

Probably the one area where the church of Jesus Christ has failed more than in any other is the lordship of Christ. We have more clearly emphasized salvation in Christ than we have the lordship of Christ. He is Lord! He wants to be Lord of all, Lord of everything in our lives. This definitely does include the pocketbook.

II. It means <u>laying</u> <u>our</u> <u>all</u> <u>on</u> <u>the</u> <u>altar</u> of service, sacrifice and surrender to Christ.

It means giving unto God our very lives. What does God want from L. H. Coleman? He wants L. H. Coleman!

He wants all that there is of me. He wants me to give Him my time, talents, treasure, loyalty, allegiance and devotion. He is no longer interested in animal sacrifices, keeping the Old Testament holy or feast days. He is looking for a living sacrifice, the sacrifice of my very life to Him for His use.

III. It means giving unto God <u>our</u> <u>very</u> <u>best</u>!

Please picture in your mind the sacrifices in Old Testament times. Suppose you offered up a goat to Almighty God as a sacrifice on one of the Jewish holy days. Upon giving the goat to the priest or high priest, perhaps he would ask you the question, "Is this the very best goat you have to offer to your God?" To bring to God the offering of a sickly, diseased, worthless goat would have been a sacrilege. It would have been unthinkable. God wants our best, not the scraps or leftovers. Please note three great truths:

1. **God deserves our very best.**

   He deserves our best because of who He is. He is the Creator of our great universe--the Creator of all things! He is the one in whose image we have been made.

   He deserves our best because of what He has done for us. Jesus gave his life at Calvary for our salvation.

   Please look again at the great hymn, **"Give of Your Best to the Master".**

2. **God <u>desires</u> our very best.**

   What does a parent expect of a child?
   What does a general expect of a soldier?
   What does a teacher expect of a student?
   What does a coach expect of a player?
   What does an employer expect of an employee?

What does God desire from each of us as His Children? **Our Very Best!** He does not expect of us little, but much. Not mediocrity, complacency or a lack-a-daisical allegiance! He wants our best. Anything less would grieve our blessed Lord.

3. **God demands our very best.**

The God that we serve makes demands upon his disciples. Jesus said, **"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24) (NKJV).**

The greatest demand that Christ makes upon us is that He wants us to be like Him. The idea of being a Christian is to be Christ-like or like Christ.

People over a period of time become like the god they serve. We should do our best to be **"conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29).**

CONCLUSION:

What will you do in this Capital Stewardship Program?

Will you give unto God your very best?

Will you become a living sacrifice?

This is your opportunity to do the BIG THING for God.

God is counting on YOU - NOW!

Chapter Eight

"CHRISTIAN GENEROSITY AS SEEN IN THE PRINCIPLE OF SOWING AND REAPING"

Text: 2 Corinthians 9:6,7

The background of this passage involves Paul's appeal to the churches of Macedonia and Corinth to give generously to help the poverty-stricken saints of the Jerusalem church.

On Paul's second missionary journey the believers at Corinth stated their pledge or intention to give to this special offering. They made a firm commitment to give. The Macedonian churches gave generously out of their poverty. Their giving far exceeded their financial ability. They viewed this special offering as a real privilege and not as an obligation.

In this passage Paul writes with encouragement and optimism. Paul expressed his confidence that the Corinthian believers would show themselves worthy of his boasting with regard to generosity in their giving. This passage is extremely relevant in the area of stewardship for today's believers.

I. Life is summed up in sowing and reaping.

One of the principal means of livelihood in Jesus' earthly ministry was farming. Much of Jesus' teachings in parables dealt with agricultural terminology. The parable of the sower is a perfect example. The farmer knows that the crop he reaps is in direct proportion to

what, when, where and how much he sows. So it is with life itself. We get out of life what we put into life. We are treated the way we treat others. **"With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. 7:2)** said Jesus. We receive in life what we send forth.

II. In life we reap EXACTLY what we sow.

Numbers 32:23 states, **"Be sure your sin will find you out." Galatians 6:7,8** states, **"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."** Please note the two words **"whatsoever"** and **"that"**. I can truthfully state that I have never done anything wrong in my life that I didn't pay for it. What goes around, comes around. We cannot sow wild oats and then pray for a crop failure. The crop will follow. Chickens will come home to roost.

III. Many times we reap MORE THAN what we sow.

Many scriptures indicate that we will reap <u>more</u> that what we sow. Often in the Old Testament there are references to things happening to the third and fourth generations.

"And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6,7) (NKJV). Also please read **Numbers 14:18**. Does this not indicate reaping more than what sow?

Please note the words of **Hosea**: **"For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7)**. What does this indicate?

During the Babylonian exile Israel reaped more than what she had sowed. **"For she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah 40:2)**.

In **Malachi 3**, God said that if we brought the tithes and offerings into His storehouse, God would **"open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10)**. What does this indicate?

Jesus indicated in one passage that we could reap one hundred fold **"now in this time" (Mark 10:30)**. **"Jesus answered and said, Assuredly I say unto you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, Who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions - and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29,30) (NKJV)**. What does hundredfold reaping indicate?

In the parable of the sower Jesus indicated that after the seed of the gospel fell on good, fertile soil, it could bring forth **"some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold and some a hundred-fold" (cf. Matthew 13:8; Mark 4:8; Luke 8:8)**.

All of the above passages would indicate that in life many times we reap **MORE** than what we sow. Is not this quite thought-provoking?

IV. The Bible has more to say about sowing the good than the bad.

Please go back to one of the classic biblical passages on sowing and reaping in **Galatians 6**. Please note the positive sowing in the following verses: **"And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:9,10)**. This is talking about sowing **good** seed for Christ.

Solomon stated, **"Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1)**.

Somehow we all are motivated in a higher and better sense by the positive than we are by the negative. Reward is a better motivation than fear of punishment. Have we not learned that **"perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18)**?

Stewardship is more effective if it emphasizes the positive more than the negative!

V. Look at the ways we may reap.

There are basically three ways that we reap when we give to the Lord sacrificially or sow good seed for Christ.

First, some individuals reap immediately. I could easily give a hundred illustrations from my work in the area of stewardship promotion when certain individuals have reaped almost immediately from having made a sacrificial commitment to Christ. One man in Georgia made a stewardship over and above commitment to his church's building program of $200 per month and he received a raise the next day of that identical amount. Some reap immediately.

Secondly, some reap much later. They may wait five, ten or fifteen years before they reap from a sacrificial commitment. They reap sometime between the time they gave and before they die.

Thirdly, some will not reap until eternity. They will do their reaping in heaven. Jesus said, **"And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12).**

VI. God is in charge of the reaping.

We are in the sowing business and God is in the reaping business. We do not tell God how to reward us or what our reaping will be. He is plenty capable of running that part of kingdom business.

If we reap immediately, later or wait until after the day of judgment, what difference does it make? If I wait or reap in eternity, so what?

We need to remember that there are many ways we can reap. Material blessings are only one way God can bless us. We could be blessed with good health, good vocation, good friends, good family or countless other ways. We should not think only in terms of material prosperity.

CONCLUSION:

Stewardship, like life, is a matter of sowing and reaping. Our text clearly states that when we give to the Lord we are sowing. We have the choice of sowing or giving sparingly or bountifully. Let us choose to give generously, or bountifully. Always we should give cheerfully out of hearts overflowing with love and gratitude to our blessed Master. The attitude in which we

give to God is very important and of utmost importance to God. Thus we must give cheerfully and from a willing heart, never grudgingly. If we can't give cheerfully, please do not give at all.

Generosity in our giving moves the arm of God to supply more seed and meet all of our needs. Furthermore generous giving will result in praise and thanksgiving to God (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:11,12).

Do the big thing for God: give cheerfully and sow bountifully!!

Chapter Nine

"THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES"

Text: Matthew 13:22; Mark 4:19

We will never be happy and productive in our Christian lives until and unless we get the money problem settled. Money is a good servant but a poor master. Money is an important part of our everyday lives. We talk about money constantly and never live a day without coming into contact with it in some way. What we need to do is put it in proper perspective. We need to prioritize it properly.

One may ask, "What do you mean when you say that we must get the money problem settled?" We mean--Who owns it? How did I get it? What will I do with it? How do I feel about it? How does it rank on the list of priorities in my life? Am I making money an object of worship? Is it my god? What are my goals regarding "my" wealth? What do I hope to accomplish through the use and investments of "my" wealth?

Jesus knew the importance of getting the money problem settled. He said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" **(Matthew 6:19-21)**. In reality our great treasure is the Lord. We need to seek first the Lord and His kingdom **(cf. Matthew 6:33)**. Our treasure

should be things that are eternal, not temporal.

I am intrigued with the expression, "deceitfulness of riches" **(Matthew 13:22)**. Jesus used this phrase in the parable of the sower, the only one of Jesus' parables that is recorded by all four gospel writers. The seed is the word of God, the message of the kingdom. The harvest time is the "last day" **(Joel 3:13,14; Revelation 14:15)**. In this story the Great Sower is also the Reaper. The purpose of the great parable was to show what happens when God's word is proclaimed among men. The parable describes the development of that seed until it reaches the time of harvest.

Jesus stated that "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful" **(Matthew 13:22)**. How are riches deceitful?

I. Riches are deceitful because they are transitory.

Riches are here today and gone tomorrow. Many stories have been told of wealthy individuals who lost all their millions of dollars during the Great Depression in the 1930's. Not only are riches transitory; all of life is transitory.

Why place your faith, trust and hope in something that is temporary and transitory? Why not base your values and build your life on the firm foundation of things that are eternal in scope?

II. Riches are deceitful because they give false hope and security.

Have you ever known an individual who really believed that money could buy anything? I knew a certain man during my adolescence who told me one day, "I have plenty of money. My wife is real sick and is

expected to die. However with my money I'll get the best medical doctors, the best hospital care, the best of everything for her. She will live because I can do anything with my money." The interesting thing is that his wife gave her testimony that she was healed miraculously through the prayers of faithful Christian friends. Within five years this gentleman died of a heart attack and his wife survived him by twenty-five years! How wrong he was to place his hope and security in his material possessions.

The man, who tore down his barns and built greater barns and said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" **(Luke 12:19),** is an illustration of being deceived by putting his security in his material possessions. This brings false hope and very false security.

III. Riches are deceitful because they tend to make us self-sufficient when we should be God-dependent.

Wealth can delude us into thinking that we are the captains of our souls and the masters of our fate. So many today are peddling the gospel of self-help. Men are told that they can pull up themselves by their own bootstraps. They believe that they are supermen and can do superhuman things in their own human strength.

Self-esteem and self-confidence are great things. I believe that people need a certain amount of self-confidence in order to be successful in life. How terrible to see certain individuals who through life are gripped with fear, doubt, intimidation and frustration. Lack of self-esteem keeps many persons from living up to their potential. However we should not fall into the trap of believing that we are self-sufficient. In the first place we

are dependent upon God for absolutely everything including the air we breathe, the sunshine we enjoy and the rain which is essential for growing our food and providing us with the water we drink, without which we could not survive. Secondly, we are also dependent upon others. We are dependent upon others to build our houses, pipe our water, manufacture our clothes, grow our food and assist us in earning our livelihood. We are very dependent, never independent. We are interdependent creatures.

IV. Riches are deceitful because they give the wrong foundation on which to build a life.

Jesus stated that we shall build our lives either upon sand which sinks or rock which stands **(cf. Matthew 7:24-27)**. When the foundation of our lives is wealth or material possessions we are going the route of building on sinking sand. When the rains of fear and doubt come, the floods of suffering and pain come, and the winds of frustration, despair and desperation occur we sink under such load, stress and pressure.

Our foundation must be Jesus Christ. He is our solid anchor. He helps us and gives us strength to face the atrocities, hardships and trials of life and gives added grace when we die. What a Saviour! What a sure hope and foundation.

Why build your life on something shaky when you can build on a solid, sure base?

Money will not buy health, happiness, joy, peace and security. Christ will give you what wealth can never deliver.

Our text states that the deceitfulness of riches choke

the word. How does this occur? In what ways will riches choke or stifle the word of God?

Riches choke the word because we have our attention, allegiance, assurance, awareness and adoration on money instead of God. Our priorities are misplaced. Either the Bible keeps us from sin or sin keeps us from studying, learning and heeding God's precious word.

If the word is to grow we need to be led and guided by the Holy Spirit, strengthened by prayer and undergirded by a strong faith in Christ. Our focus must be Christ. Our desire must be to please God if Bible study is meaningful. We cannot turn our attention to materialism and get any mileage from the word of God. It's that simple!

CONCLUSION:

Trust in the Lord completely. Place your life under the lordship of Christ. Do not make money your main priority in life. Do not let material possessions become your object of worship. Material possessions must not become our main obsession in life. Remember money cannot buy happiness, heaven or eternal life.

The bottom line is that we should use "our" wealth to the glory of God. If I am to use my head, eyes, ears, mouth, arms and legs to the glory of God, why not use my pocketbook to bring glory to God?

All "our" wealth is His! We are His! We should do all we can, live all we can and give all we can to the Lord WHILE WE CAN!! Work for Jesus because your labors are not in vain in the Lord.

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37).

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

Chapter Ten

"THE CHALLENGE TO GIVE EXTRAVAGANTLY"

Text: Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:2-8

Some scholars have questioned if these accounts are dealing with the same incident. Dr. A. T. Robertson believed that this was the same happening but told uniquely by three different gospel writers. Each writer writes from a different perspective. For example did she anoint Jesus' head or feet? John indicates that Mary of Bethany anointed his feet and wiped his feet with her hair. Matthew and Mark indicate that she anointed Jesus' head. Perhaps both are entirely correct. Mary of course was the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

The occasion was a meal at the home of Simon the leper in Bethany two days prior to Christ's crucifixion. The Jewish rulers in Jerusalem had already begun to plot His death. **(cf. Matthew 26:1-5; Mark 14:1-2; Luke 22:1-2).**

Unfolding in this passage is one of the greatest stories in all the four gospels. No one should ever forget the love, devotion and loyalty Mary of Bethany had for our Lord. She gives us the challenge to give to Christ extravagantly.

I. Mary of Bethany loved devotedly.

The real basis of giving and serving God is love. When we give to Christ we prove the sincerity of our love **(cf. 2 Corinthians 8:8).** One can give without loving but

we cannot love without giving. Mary said nothing in this story. She acted. Her actions displayed her deep love for Christ.

She had extravagant love. What are the characteristics of this kind of love?

(1) Extravagant love gives sacrificially. It gives without ever counting the cost.
(2) Extravagant love is not conscious of the effect it may have on others. Mary was so involved in her love for her Lord that she did not consider the opinion of others. She just acted. She gave spontaneously.
(3) Extravagant love is being submissive to the will of God.

There are times in our lives when it is entirely appropriate for us to be extravagant in the expression of our love for Christ.

II. Mary of Bethany gave extravagantly.

What she gave was "very costly", according to Mark's account **(Mark 14:3) (NKJV)**. Matthew states that it was "precious ointment" **(Matthew 26:7)**. John is the most descriptive of Mary's gift. John states, "Then Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus" **(John 12:3)**. Judas Iscariot protested, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" **(John 12:5)**. Please keep in mind that this represented a great deal of money in those days. When Jesus fed the five thousand Philip suggested to Christ that the cost of feeding such a

multitude would have been two hundred pence **(cf. John 6:7)**.

A pence was a Roman denarius which was worth in that day approximately twenty cents. Thus three hundred denarius would be the equivalent of sixty dollars or one year's wages.

Mary broke the cruse and poured it on His head as He ate and perhaps later poured the remainder on His feet. She did not take her decision to a committee for a vote. She did not consult with the apostles or disciples. She did not ask Jesus for permission. This costly ointment probably was being saved for her own burial or perhaps the burial of members of her family. The gift was extravagant but she wanted to do it. Without hesitation or consultation she broke this costly vase of nard. She loved; therefore, she gave.

III. She understood the situation implicitly.

Evidently not everyone present understood the nearness of Jesus' death. In two days Jesus would be crucified on a cruel Roman cross. His death was imminent. Jesus fully understood the timing and nature of His death. Unlike most of the disciples, Mary understood the true situation.

After Judas protested that the ointment should have been sold and the money given to the poor, Jesus clearly stated that Mary was anointing Him for burial **(cf. John 12:7; Matthew 26:12; Mark 14:8)**.

Some Christians have much greater spiritual insight and perception than others. Mary was a good listener. She had heard the pungent words of Jesus. She could sense that hostility toward Him was increasing. She was

attuned. She knew Jesus was going to die and understood why. She simply wanted to express her love in a very tangible way.

Can't you imagine the wonder and amazement that was on the faces of Jesus' disciples when this dear woman broke this costly vase? It was so amazing that we are still talking and reading about it unto this very day.

IV. She won the undying admiration of Jesus.

The disciples were puzzled by Mary's actions. Judas was horrified, not that he cared that much for the poor, but he failed to pocket some of the money. What was the response of Jesus? This is actually the response that mattered the most. Jesus stated that "she hath wrought a good work upon me" **(Matthew 26:10)**. Jesus said, "she hath done what she could" **(Mark 14:8)**. He further stated, "Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial unto her" **(Mark 14:9;** also **cf. Matthew 26:13)**.

Mary was spiritually discerning and did not miss a golden and irrecoverable opportunity. After Jesus perceived Mary's unusual spiritual comprehension he lavished upon her tremendous praise. To my knowledge this was the one and only anointing that his body received. The women who came on the third day following his death to perform this task found simply an empty tomb.

What Mary did has become an important part of the biblical account of the life and ministry of Christ. She made a great contribution with her life. She has certainly been remembered.

CONCLUSION:

What have we done of a significant nature for Christ? In a Capital Stewardship Program we have a great opportunity to do something significant for Christ. Do we really love Jesus? Are we truly a devoted follower of the Master? How much do we love our Saviour and Lord?

The world will think we are insane when we give sacrificially, generously and extravagantly to Christ. Remember extravagant love does not consider the opinion of others. Had Mary taken a Gallup poll to ask whether she should have given something so costly a gift to Christ the poll undoubtedly would have come back overwhelmingly, "No". What does it matter what the world thinks of what we do for Christ or what we give to the cause of spreading the gospel throughout the world?

What matters is the response of Christ. Our goal in life should be to hear the Master say, "You have done what you could for Christ"?

Chapter Eleven

"MORE THAN ENOUGH"

Text: Matthew 14:15-21; Mark 6:35-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14

Today's message deals with the most familiar of all the miracles of Jesus, the feeding of the five thousand. This must have made an indelible impression on the followers of Jesus and the early church because it is the only one of Jesus' thirty-seven miracles that is recorded by all four gospel writers. This came at a time of great popularity in the ministry of Christ. The occasion was the fact that the Feast of the Passover was drawing near. The people from the northern regions were on their way to Jerusalem to observe the important feast commemorating the passing of the death angel over the homes of the Israelites at the time of the tenth plague in Egypt when the Israelites' male babies were spared of death. Hence a great multitude was present in Galilee at this time. What an opportunity for ministry! Jesus would seize this opportunity!

I. Andrew saw a lad with a lunch.

The twelve apostles had returned from their mission and ministry and reported their successes. On Jesus' agenda was a time of withdrawal for rest and relaxation or perhaps further instruction for the Twelve. News had just arrived of John the Baptist's death at the hands of Herod. Jesus was approaching Bethsaida, a town on the shore of

the sea of Galilee perhaps just east of the place where the Jordan River flows into the sea. Because of the problem of reconciling **John 12:21** with **Luke 9:10** several scholars have concluded that there were two different towns named "Bethsaida". One could have been located on the northeast shore and the other on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. This point cannot be totally resolved. We must see how the rest of the story unfolds.

Two individual disciples are mentioned by name in the story -- Philip and Andrew. Philip calculated that it would require about two hundred denarii to feed such a multitude. A Roman denarius could be worth about twenty cents; thus forty dollars would be required to feed the crowd. (A meal at McDonald's today for 5,000 would cost approximately $10,000.) Please note that the gospel writers stated that 5,000 men were present. When you add the women and children the crowd perhaps would have been larger than fifteen thousand.

Andrew was the thoughtful disciple always bringing someone or something to Jesus. Here he took note of a lad with a lunch. He suggested that the lad give this to Jesus. After all this seemingly was all the food that was available. Since it was early afternoon it was somewhat miraculous that the lad still had his lunch, which had been prepared by a very thoughtful mother. The lunch included five barley loaves and two small fishes. Someone has suggested the fishes were the size of sardines. The typical human reaction was, "...but what are they among so many?" **(John 6:9)**.

II. Jesus saw an opportunity to meet a need.

The difference in the entire story was Jesus. He is

always the difference in all of life. Jesus received the gift of the lad upon the urging of Andrew. He gave thanks and blessed the loaves and fishes. Note that he distributed the food to the disciples. Jesus was the **Source**, the **Multiplier**, the **Miracle-Worker**. The more food he gave to the disciples to distribute the more became available. Did Jesus keep reaching into the sack? Did he take the loaves and fishes out of the sack? Who knows? What we know is that the touch of the Master's hand to the meal meant the feeding of the multitude. Jesus did not run out of food! This is a picture of God's inexhaustible grace! There was more than enough!

Note the divine cooperation. Jesus performed the miracle involving food. Between Jesus and the multitude were the disciples. The Lord always works with, in and through people. They cooperated in His ministry to the multitude. They helped. This is what we can call "divine cooperation". Jesus met the physical needs of a great host of people that afternoon.

Now the people would be in a better frame of mind to hear Jesus' preaching and teaching.

Are you aware that a miracle preceded this miracle? Luke records, **"...and (Jesus) healed them that had need of healing" (Luke 9:11)**. Even as the crowd was assembling for instruction from Jesus He displayed his divine miraculous power of healing the sick.

III. The people saw a prophet sent from God.

What was the reaction of the people to the feeding of the five thousand? John wrote, **"then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the**

world" (John 6:14). The stomachs of the people were all filled. Their hearts were filled with awe, wonder and amazement! What happened in their minds and hearts was more important than what happened in their stomachs. Now they could appreciate and appropriate Jesus' teaching that He was the Bread of Life, the living Bread from above.

The people reacted with strong belief. Jesus was the promised Messiah. He was the Manna from Heaven itself. He was the Staff of life and Giver of eternal life.

Note that they could not eat all of the bread Jesus provided them. The leftovers were significant. The residue was twelve baskets of bread or one for each of the twelve apostles. Mark alone records that it was so done with the fishes also. There was more than enough! We cannot outgive God! God's economy is that when we give to God, God gives back to us. We keep giving to God, but He keeps giving to us. We keep on giving to God and He keeps on giving back to us. But we cannot outgive God! God gives back to us in such a manner that we always have **MORE** than enough! He supplies all our needs -- and then some! Imagine this! In this story 5 + 2 = 12 fragments remaining. Yes, the difference was and is Christ!

IV. We See today Jesus as the Bread of life.

John later in Chapter 6 (vs. 35-40) presents Jesus as the Bread of Life. Jesus said, **"I am the bread of life" (John 6:35)**. Jesus was sent by His heavenly Father. He was sent to do the will of His Father. He was sent to give eternal life to all who would believe in Him.

The people wanted Jesus to become their earthly, political king. They wanted Him to set up an earthly kingdom. This would have been a perfect time to do so had this been part of His agenda. This probably was the zenith of Jesus' popularity. Jesus did not come to rule on an earthly, political throne. He wants to rule and reign on the throne of our hearts. God's kingdom is within the hearts of his disciples and followers. His kingdom is not of this world.

He is the Bread that feeds our souls. His food is eternal. Yes, He is the one and only Bread of Life.

CONCLUSION:

What are some lessons we can learn from the story of the lad who gave his lunch to the Lord? The main lesson is that Jesus can take whatever we give to Him and multiply it so that human needs are met.

A Capital Stewardship Program is a great opportunity to give and give sacrificially to Jesus. When we bring our monetary and in-kind gifts to Jesus He can multiply our gifts, bless them and work wonders.

God bless us as we give generously of our material possessions to the Master!

Chapter Twelve

"THE GRACE OF GIVING"

Text: 2 Corinthians 8 and 9

The pearl of all New Testament passages on stewardship is **2 Corinthians 8 and 9**. There are some great principles set forth in these marvelous chapters.

I. We Are Enjoined To Enter Into The Grace Of Giving. 8:1-2

The saints at Jerusalem were in dire straits. They were in financial need because of persecution and a famine **(cf. Acts 11:28)**. As life's necessities were distributed to the needy in Jerusalem by government officials the Christians were discriminated against.

The Corinthians had pledged their financial support and the Macedonian believers gave very generously to the offering out of deep poverty. Paul commended their generosity **(cf. 2 Corinthians 8:2)**. The churches in Macedonia were exhibits of God's grace. They were recipients of this amazing grace and dispensers also. Furthermore they gave with great, abundant joy **(cf. 2 Corinthians 8:2)**.

II. There Should Be Jubilation In Giving. 8:3-4

These verses are tremendous because we are told that the Macedonians gave beyond their ability to give. How

many do you know who truly give sacrificially? The Macedonians did not need any prompting or begging. They gave voluntarily and willingly. They had great hearts to give. When people give gladly and spontaneously they receive a blessing because they are acting out of obedience and love. Why did they give so freely? The grace of God prompted this kind of hilarious stewardship. Let's give with warm-hearted, happy jubilation! It's contagious!

III. Giving Should Be Motivated By Love. 8:5-9

2 Corinthians 8:5 is one of the greatest verses concerning stewardship in the entire Bible. The secret of New Testament stewardship is summed up in this one thought: **"but they first gave themselves to the Lord" (NKJV).** First we must give ourselves completely to the Lord. When we do this then giving of our material substance comes automatically. We first should put our lives under the lordship of Christ. If this has been done, then there is no struggle to give our pocketbooks to the Lord for His use as well. **2 Corinthians 8:6** indicates that generous giving is a grace. The Corinthians were enjoined by Paul to "abound" in this grace also **(2 Corinthians 8:7).**

Please note in **8:8** that one great reason for generous giving is to "prove the sincerity" of our love for Christ. Giving puts our Christianity to the acid test. Giving generously tests our sincerity. Is not a stingy person an example of insincerity in one's commitment to Christ? The Macedonian believers were poor; yet they gave liberally. Beyond question they had proven the sincerity of their love for Christ.

IV. Willingness Is A Key Factor In Giving. 8:10-12

Paul in these verses is chiding the Corinthian Church to complete its commitment. A year earlier they had pledged to give to this worthy offering. Paul is now urging them to perform and make their promise good. Intention is one thing; action is something better. The Corinthians should complete what they commenced.

In these verses Paul stressed willingness. Grace giving always lends itself to a willing heart or spirit. Grace giving cannot be coerced. Giving that is prompted by love is never forced.

V. Grace Giving Is A Matter Of Faith. 8:13-24

Paul in verses **13-15** emphasized "equality" in giving. The Gentile background believers had been enriched spiritually by the Jewish heritage and Old Testament scriptures. Through this special offering the Jewish background believers could be enriched financially by the Gentile Christians. At that present time the Gentile believers were enjoying material blessings but later on the situation could be reversed. Verse 15 is a reference to God's giving to the Israelites the manna from heaven during the wilderness wanderings during the era of Moses. They always had exactly what they needed. Likewise the Gentiles should not try to hoard God's blessings but share from their abundance. Grace giving never satisfies itself with giving the tithe, but grace giving wants us to have a desire to give the maximum.

Faith is a key element in everything involved in the Christian walk which includes stewardship. We obey God and trust Him to meet all our needs as we try to help others.

Another point is made in this passage: Paul administered the funds fairly and prudently. He handled no funds directly. Accountability of the funds given is an important point in fund raising. No one individual was entrusted with these funds. Integrity encourages generosity in giving. A good principle always to follow is: **"Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Romans 12:17).**

VI. Our Giving Will Have An Influence On Others. 9:1-5

Paul had used the Corinthians as examples of making a commitment to give to the Macedonians as he challenged the Macedonians to give generously. This principle of grace giving worked. Paul stated, **"...and your zeal hath provoked very many" (9:2). Hebrews 10:24** states that we are to provoke others to good works. One good reason that we are to be generous in our giving is that it will have a positive influence on others.

VII. The Principle Of Sowing And Reaping Applies To Giving. 9:6-11

Probably the greatest principle involved in Christian stewardship is found in these verses. At the heart of the passage is the statement: **"...for God loveth a cheerful giver" (9:7).** God himself is a cheerful Giver. He is the Giver of every good and perfect gift **(cf. James 1:17).** The God we serve is a giving God.

In **9:6** Paul stated that we have a choice in our giving. We can either give **"sparingly"** or **"bountifully".** Our reaping will be in proportion to our sowing. We need to ask ourselves, **"What is the most I can give?"** instead of **"What is the least I can give and still live with my**

conscience?"

Please do not overlook **9:8**. God is able to get it to us if He can get it through us. He is the Source of our wealth. He will see to it that if we have a willingness to give the finances our "wherewithal" will always be there, making it possible for us to give. He is the God of **"all sufficiency"**. What a tremendous thought!

VIII. Note What Giving Accomplishes. 9:12

Who benefited from this offering? Obviously the Jerusalem saints did because a real need was met. Also the Macedonian and Corinthian believers benefited because **Acts 20:35** teaches us that it is more blessed to give than receive. This verse did not state that those who receive from others are not blessed. Most definitely they are. However the giver receives a greater blessing than the receiver. Furthermore the entire Christian church benefited. The cause of Christ benefited. The two elements within the church (Jewish and Gentile) were united through this act of love. When something brings about unity within the body of Christ this is very significant.

IX. Giving That Glorifies God. 9:13

One of the goals of the Christian life is to glorify God **(cf. Matthew 5:16)**. Undoubtedly upon receiving this financial assistance the Jerusalem believers knelt on their knees and thanked God for the offering. Their praise and thanksgiving first and foremost was to God their Provider. We should be very sensitive to meeting the needs of fellow believers especially.

Part of sharing the gospel is meeting practical needs of

those about us. Giving generously causes our lights to shine for Christ and bring glory to the Saviour who prompted us to give.

X. Giving That Unites God's People. 9:14-15

As already indicated the church had a division at this time: Gentile believers vs. Jewish believers. Paul tried and tried to bring these two elements in one body. His pattern on his missionary journeys was first to preach the gospel to the Jews. He used synagogues to share Christ only to be rejected, generally speaking. Then he would turn his attention to the Gentiles. Almost without exception the Gentiles would enthusiastically receive the gospel message.

Verse 15 indicates that our giving should be a positive response to Christ, God's indescribable gift. Christ is the focal point and basis of unification of all grace giving.

CONCLUSION:

There were probably three churches in Macedonia - Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. These churches exemplified the grace of generous giving. Because of the Macedonian's response the Corinthians gave generously also. Great good was accomplished.

The great need in churches today is for grace giving. Too many church leaders use a crisis approach to appeal for funds. Some churches are over-built and under-financed. This provokes a crises mentality. The appeal is: "Give today because our note at the bank is past due.

Our bond payment will come due next week. Or we have a bad roof leak and no insurance plus no funds available". These churches get a steady diet of going from one crisis to another.

The wise approach is without hype or pressure to present positively the biblical principles of stewardship. Open the Word of God and point out what the Bible says in these two marvelous chapters. Challenge your people to follow God and obey the scriptures.

Have you discovered the joy and privilege of grace giving?

Chapter Thirteen

"GODLINESS OR GRIEFS?"

Text: 1 Timothy 6:3-19

Our main goal in life should be seeking and achieving godliness - honoring, serving and pleasing God. This passage has as its main theme the gaining of godliness. To gain godliness we should avoid certain roadblocks such as greed or love of money.

I. False Doctrines Lead to Wrong Thinking and Behavior. vs. 3-5

To live a godly life the beginning point is "godly teaching" (v.3) (NIV). We must be taught God's ways and will. We must learn to accept the precepts and principles of godliness. We need "sound instruction" (v.3) (NIV).

What happens if we receive false instructions?

1. **We are "conceited" v.4 (NIV).**
2. **We "understand nothing" v. 4 (NIV).**
3. **We are given to "controversies and quarrels" v. 4 (NIV).**

   The results of controversies and quarreling are envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction. This sounds like certain, unruly church business meetings, doesn't it?
4. **We are "robbed of the truth" v. 5 (NIV).**

God's word is truth. Christ also is the truth. Remember, the truth sets us free.

5. **Some go so far as to think that "godliness is a means to financial gain" v. 5 (NIV).**
   Have you heard certain preachers and evangelists tell their audiences that godliness will result in health and wealth for those who have strong faith. I am not downplaying faith. I am not downplaying divine healing. I am not decrying prosperity. If we are blessed with good health we should thank God. If we are blessed with wealth and use it for the glory of God, be thankful.

However, when we received Christ as Lord and Saviour we were promised life abundant and life eternal. We were promised peace, joy and God's love. We were not given a ticket to perfect health. We were not issued a certificate guaranteeing us wealth. If this were the case folks would become Christians for the wrong motives. Instead we were promised persecution. Christ assured us that the world would hate us as it had hated him. **(cf. John 15:18ff.)**.

Thus godliness is <u>not</u> a means to financial gain as the passage definitely indicates. False doctrine is a very dangerous thing. Avoid it at all costs!

II. Follow the Pursuit of Godliness vs. 6-10

We are told in verse 6 that **"godliness with contentment is great gain" (NIV)**.

Verses 7 and 8 portray to us the right view of wealth. These are tremendous verses involving the

stewardship of material possessions.

Verse seven portrays God's ownership and man's stewardship. We brought nothing into the world. We were born naked. We had no silver spoon in our hands when we were born. On the day of birth our assets were zero. Yes, one might argue that we owed a certain amount of the national debt. One may argue that a certain amount of the family fortune belonged to the newborn. There is actually no argument: we brought nothing into the world. I don't believe anyone can argue the fact that we shall take nothing out of this world when we die. We leave all our material possessions behind.

Verse eight indicates that in life we should be content with life's necessities which include food and clothing. We want more. We want the luxuries of life. I can still hear my deceased godly grandfather pray the simple prayer before our meals, "I thank you, Lord, that You have provided food and raiment for us all the days of our lives." How simple, yet profound!

Verses 9 and 10 portray to us the wrong view of wealth. Verse nine discusses what happens to those who have a burning ambition to get rich. These individuals "fall into temptation and a trap" (NIV). They fall "into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge man into ruin and destruction." How true! Many could be the illustration of this truth.

Verse ten gets to the heart of the real blockade to godliness. The main roadblock is "love of money." Never say money is the root of all kinds of evil. It is the love of money that is the root of all evil. At the root of the problems of alcoholism, drug trafficking, prostitution, pornography, gambling, bribery, graft, and

all kinds of corruption in our society is greed or love of money. Some men love money more than mankind, wealth more than wisdom, and monetary gain more than moral values.

Verse ten lists two results of love of money:

1. **Some people have "wandered from the faith" (NIV).**
2. **Some have "pierced themselves with many griefs" (NIV).**

Greed eventually will lead to grief and lots of it!

III. In the next place we are to flee, fight and focus. vs. 11-16

Note Paul's further instruction in the pursuit of godliness:

1. **FLEE these Follies. v. 11.**

Paul tells us to "flee from all this" (NIV). We are to run from greed and avoid trying to get rich as our main goal in life. In the place of greed we need to emphasize "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness" (NIV). What a six-fold formula for victory for every Christian!

2. **Next we are to FIGHT the good fight of faith. v. 12.**

We are in Christian warfare. Satan is attacking us everyday from every angle. We are to fight him. We are to fight back. We are to fight hard and vigorously. Our weapon is faith. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world. Our fight involves the frontier of faith. Please Read **Hebrews 11**. Read about our heroes of faith. Here we have the Faith "Hall of Fame". We walk by faith. We live

by faith; we die by faith. Our entire Christian life is a walk of faith. Put your faith into action.

3. **FOCUS on eternal life. vs. 12b-16**

Our focus should be on the eternal life that Jesus gives. Paul admonishes us to **"take hold of eternal life" (v. 12) (NIV)**. This is to be our primary focus. According to verse 12 our "calling" is eternal life, which is a present possession as well as a future reality.

IV. Warnings To the Wealthy. vs. 17-19

Paul concludes this marvelous passage with a warning of the perils of being wealthy. Of course having wealth is a relative matter. Most of us in America when we compare ourselves with the majority of the citizens of the world are wealthy indeed.

1. **Avoid arrogance. v. 17a**

How easy it is to fall into the snare of being an elitist when pondering our stocks, bonds, property, and other assets. Are we arrogant? The Bible teaches that "pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall **(Prov. 16:18) (NIV)**. Arrogance antagonizes others. An arrogant spirit is foreign to the teachings of Jesus concerning humility and servanthood.

2. **Avoid putting your hope in wealth. v. 17b**

We should not put our hope in wealth because of life's uncertainties. A person can be wealthy one year and a pauper the next. We could name millionaires who had to go the route of bankruptcy. How embarrassing! Money gives people false hope. On the other hand we are to place our hope and trust in God **(cf. v. 17c)**.

3. **We should be "Rich in good deeds" v. 18 (NIV)**

   Do you want **true** riches? Paul tells us how to attain life's actual riches in this passage. We are to store up our riches in the storehouse of "good deeds". Please read **James 1:27 and 2:5-7**, which bears out this great truth. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus stressed good deeds in **Matthew 5:16**. We can all be rich in this fashion as we sow the seeds of good deeds along life's pathway.

4. **We should be "generous" v. 18 (NIV).**

   Verse 18 states that the way we are to honor God with our wealth is to **"be generous and willing to share" (NIV)**. A Capital Stewardship Program certainly provides us with an opportunity to give generously and sacrificially to Christ. Instead of being greedy and selfish we ought to be generous and willing to share our wealth for the cause of Christ.

5. **Lay up Treasures in Heaven. v. 19.**

   Verse 19 reminds us of the words of Christ: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" **(Matthew 6:19-21) (NIV)**.

CONCLUSION:

Godliness brings great gain with contentment but greed brings pain and grief. Do you want gain or pain? Grief or godliness? Our life is built on the foundation of faith if we are true believers in Christ. Our hope is in God. Our real trust is in Jesus Christ. We are committed to please, serve, honor and worship Him! Our goal should be the pursuit of godliness. We are to begin with godly teaching and instruction, feast on faith and bear fruit unto eternal life in Christ. Let's be godly people in a totally godless world filled with ungodly people. Then our beacon will shine forth as a great light and penetrate the darkness of evil in this present world. Go for godliness with great gusto!!!

Chapter Fourteen

"THE LAW OF GIVING"

Text: Luke 6:38

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

In our world there are certain laws or maxims. The first law that comes to mind is the law of gravity. Who cares who discovered this law? Was it Isaac Newton? Men knew about this law for centuries before someone articulated it accurately. There is the law of the seasons. Fall precedes winter. Spring precedes summer. We call this the law of seedtime and harvest. We could speak concerning the law of life's echo. In other words we always reap what we sow. **2 Corinthians 8 and 9** discuss the principle of sowing and reaping involving giving.

What about another law involving giving? This law is found in **Luke 6:38**. The author of this law is Jesus himself.

I. First please note the <u>COMMAND</u> of giving.

The command of Jesus is in the form of an imperative: <u>GIVE</u>. Jesus ordered us to give. Although we immediately think of material possessions it could mean to give anything. It could mean to give food, blood, time,

an organ of your body, your services, etc. In **Acts 3** when the lame man at the Temple asked Peter and James for alms, Peter replied, **"Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6).** The church can no longer today say, "Silver and gold have I none". We are blessed. We have plenty of wealth. We are an affluent society. I am terribly afraid that neither can the church say today, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk", because we have lost our spiritual power. We are spiritually impotent and weak.

Jesus said, **"GIVE"**. Two things we need to get across to our people in a Capital Stewardship Program: the church needs your money and you need to give. The church needs your money because how are you going to build, remodel, relocate and retire debt without money? Money is essential. Also we as believers need to give because we are commanded to do so and we shall receive a blessing from giving found in no other fashion. **GIVE. GIVE MUCH**. Give until it hurts. Give until it helps. Keep on giving as long as the Father keeps on giving to you.

The Christian religion is a giving religion. "For God so loved that He gave". This verse states plainly: **GIVE.**

II. Then note the COMPENSATION of Giving.

Jesus said, **"Give, and it shall be given unto you."** The compensation for giving is that it shall be given back to you. It shall be given back in direct proportion to your giving. The law of giving means, "I give to the Lord and He gives back to me. I keep on giving to God and He

keeps on giving back to me. I give more to the Lord and He gives more back to me." If He can get it through you, He'll get it to you.

The way to receive from God is to give to God. Do you enjoy receiving from God? Then give to Him and He'll give back to you. When we have a spirit of giving God will always see to it that we can give.

God will make it possible for us to give, if we have it in our spirit to give. He is our Source. He is our Sustainer. He is our great Provider. He always makes it possible for us to give.

Give what you can. The "certain" widow gave two mites. She gave her one penny or whatever the value may have been of her two small coins. But the point is that she gave. She gave something. Even more than that, she gave everything she had!

Do you enjoy giving? Is it a true enjoyment? Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" **(Acts 20:35)**.

Be glad you can give; then give gladly. Give joyfully. Give expectantly. Give with excitement and anticipation!

III. Next please note the COMPOUNDING of Giving.

One of the great innovations of banking was when the banks decided to pay their customers compound interest. This means we are paid interest not just on the principal but on the principal and previous interest as well.

God compounds our giving. It works on the same principle as compound interest. How will God reward and repay us when we give? He will repay with

1. "Good measure"
2. "Pressed down"
3. "Shaken together"
4. "Running over"
5. How? "Men shall give into our bosoms".

What a deal! Compounded compensation!

We shall get an abundant return on our eternal investment in God's kingdom. God has his own way of paying back His children. He does not operate by happenstance or coincidence. He does not give back reluctantly or spasmodically. He is very consistent and dependable. He is as reliable as His word. What God declares He will do, He always does. Count on it! Stake your very life on it.

The part of the promise I like best is "running over". I have in my mind grapes that have been pressed into juice. The keeper of the vineyard tells me to come over with my cup or glass. Then what happens? He fills my cup up to the top until it runs over. The Psalmist said, "my cup runneth over" or "overflows". I like a religion where blessings are abundant, rise to the top of our spiritual cups and <u>overflow</u> into the lives of others. Is your relationship with Christ so dynamic that it overflows?

Cash in on **Luke 6:38**. Reach the "running over" stage in your commitment to Christ.

IV. Finally, please note the <u>CONDITION</u> of Giving.

The last part of our verse indicates to us the condition of all giving: **"For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."** God has his conditions for everything. We have the condition of

salvation. There is no guesswork in the plan of salvation or the conditions upon which our conversion rests. God laid down the conditions of all His covenants.

The condition of giving means that the way we give is the way God will give back to us. In other words we cannot outgive God. He measures what we give, how we give, why we give. He measures the entire process. He looks outwardly and inwardly. He leaves no stone unturned. He sees all.

Then God puts this into His divine computer. He never errs. He always comes up with the correct total. Always. Then he computes it back in our direction.

How do we know this is true? We know because God said it was so. Furthermore we know by experience. The true believer believes God. We accept this axiom by faith. We test it. We give. We give bountifully. Later we testify to the world that God gives back to us bountifully. We sow bountifully or generously. We reap accordingly.

"For if you give, you will get! Your gift will return to you in full and overflowing measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use to give--large or small--will be used to measure what is given back to you." Luke 6:38 (TLNT)

CONCLUSION:

Why don't you put God to the test? Why don't you find out for yourself the truth and greatness of this verse? Amen and Amen!!

Chapter Fifteen

"THE MAN WHO REPENTED WITH HIS POCKETBOOK"

Text: Luke 19:1-10

The story of the conversion of Zacchaeus is one of the most familiar in all the Bible. When you tour the Holy Land the tour conductor or guide will always stop beside a sycamore tree in Jericho and recall this great narrative found in Luke's gospel.

The name, Zacchaeus, means "the pure or righteous one". He did not live up to his name until after he had an encounter with Jesus as his Lord and Saviour.

I. The Description

First please take note of Zacchaeus' three-fold description:

1. He was small of statue v. 3
2. He was a chief tax-collector v. 2
3. He was wealthy v. 2

Tradition states that Matthew and Zacchaeus were friends and Matthew told Jesus about his friend. He told him that the next time the Master was in Jericho to please try and meet him and bring him to salvation.

There were two kinds of tax collectors in Jesus' day: Gabbai and Mockhes. Stating the case in a very simplistic manner, the Gabbai tax collectors dealt with the larger taxes, such as property and the Mockhes collectors

dealt with the multitudinous smaller taxes. Zacchaeus was the Mockhes chief collector which automatically lent itself to graft and corruption. Undoubtedly Zacchaeus was a cheater in the truest sense of the term. Zacchaeus had contracted with the government in Rome to collect revenues in his district. He was despised for contributing to Roman domination.

Having dealt in taxes that could easily lead to theft, lying and deceit, Zacchaeus became very wealthy. Probably instead of reporting all his tax collections to the government sent to Rome, he put excessive amounts of money into his personal coffers. Probably Zacchaeus was bank president and Chamber of Commerce president in Jericho, a key city of that day with a marvelous heritage.

Also Zacchaeus was short of statue. He probably had a "Napoleon" complex and sought political power.

II. The Determination

Next, please note Zacchaeus' determination. Zacchaeus was absolutely determined to see Jesus as he passed through Jericho. Throngs of people lined the streets to get a glimpse of this miracle-working Messiah. Zacchaeus undoubtedly had heard about the fact that Jesus had made the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to talk and even raised the dead. Zacchaeus had an insatiable curiosity and interest in Jesus. He wanted to know more. He wanted to see Him; so he climbed a sycamore tree. He was not thinking about looking dignified. He was not conscious of how a grown and prosperous businessman would appear to others by being in a tree. Usually children climbed trees. Being of small stature Zacchaeus figured that this would be the only way

he could see Jesus.

III. The Decision

In reality Jesus was more interested in Zacchaeus than Zacchaeus was in Jesus. Christ spotted him in the tree. Jesus looked to him and through him. He challenged him to come down and invited him to lunch at his home. Immediately Zacchaeus had to make a decision. Would he accept Jesus' invitation? This was a very pointed decision requiring a "yes" or "no". Zacchaeus decided to come down and invite Jesus to dine with him at his home. Usually a wife is consulted before an invitation is extended to come to one's home. Was the house in order and clean? This mattered not to Zacchaeus because he was thinking now about eternal matters.

IV. The Desire

Zacchaeus received Jesus Christ joyfully into his heart as well as his home. Zacchaeus, after having received Christ into his heart, expressed a great desire that left no doubt as to his genuine repentance. He desired:

1. to give half of his possessions to the poor, and
2. to offer restitution to those he had cheated in a four-fold manner.

Zacchaeus repented and he repented with his pocketbook. How we view wealth tells a great deal about our character. What we do with our material possessions and our attitude toward money is an excellent gauge as to our spirituality.

Zacchaeus had a disturbed conscience. He had been a cheater; now he is a convert. Previously he had been given to graft; now he was interested in the gospel of Christ. He had to make his wrongs right. He had to

give evidence of full repentance.

When Zacchaeus called on someone he had cheated and repaid him four times what he had cheated him, that person must have remarked, "What a drastic change has come over Zacchaeus. I knew he cheated me but I was helpless in dealing with such a powerful person. Christ accomplished what no court of law could have possibly accomplished."

How did the poor who lived in and near Jericho respond? Probably they were shocked and amazed. Zacchaeus became a one man Salvation Army and United Way overnight. The poor could never forget the good deeds of this saved tax collector.

V. The Declaration

The most important part of the story is the declaration of Jesus. What really counts is what Jesus states as fact.

1. Salvation had come to the home and heart of Zacchaeus **cf. v. 9**
2. **"The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." v. 10 (NIV)**

Jesus emphatically declared without any hesitation or equivocation that Zacchaeus had received salvation. He was now a saved individual. He was now heaven-bound. Zacchaeus had repented with his will and his pocketbook. He had received Christ into his life. Evidence abounded that he had brought forth "fruit meet for repentance" **(Matthew 3:8).**

The physical son of Abraham had now been received as a member of the spiritual family of Abraham. Now he was a member of spiritual Israel. "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely

outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men but from God" **(Romans 2:28-29) (NIV)**.

Zacchaeus was now a part of the Israel of God. Who are God's chosen people? God's chosen people are those, like Zacchaeus, who choose Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Furthermore Jesus declared that his primary mission and ministry was to seek and save lost souls. **Luke 19:10** is one of the most significant declarations of Jesus in all the four gospels.

CONCLUSION:

The story of Zacchaeus' conversion is a great episode in the life of Christ. Zacchaeus gave the world a great testimony. He put material possessions in its proper perspective following his conversion experience. He used his money to bring about good among both believers and unbelievers. He turned his pocketbook into a great asset instead of being a big liability. He spoke with both words and actions; however actions speak much louder than words.

The one who came to see Jesus stayed long enough to see himself. The needy sinner became a benevolent saint.

Chapter Sixteen

"GOD'S TITHE - THE MINIMUM IN CHRISTIAN GIVING"

Text: Malachi 3:3-18

Tithing is a great beginning point for the Christian in the matter of giving. Tithing is the "rent" we pay for living in God's world, enjoying the blessings of life and receiving life's necessities from a great, wonderful and loving God who created us in His image.

Malachi three is only one of many passages in the Old and New Testaments relating to tithing but it is the one with significant insight and impact in an important item relative to the Christian faith.

Tithing is only one small part of stewardship. Stewardship includes the entirety of our lives, our influence, and "our" possessions. Tithing involves paying one-tenth of our income in acknowledgement of Christ's redeeming love and saving grace. It is based on the conviction that all that we have are trusts from Almighty God to be used in His service for His glory to benefit all mankind and accelerate the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ into all the world. The actual beginning point of stewardship is the giving of self to Jesus Christ. We **first** should give ourselves to Christ for His service. We should place our lives under the lordship of Christ. Stewardship includes but goes far beyond tithing **(cf. 1 Corinthians 6:20)**.

Now what does God say to us through this passage in Malachi three?

I. The Concept of Returning. v. 7

Please do not begin by reading **Malachi 3:8**. It is a good idea to begin with **Malachi 1:1** and read the entire book. (Better yet begin with **Genesis 1:1** and read all through to **Revelation 22:21.**)

In **Malachi 3:7** please note that the people of Israel had wandered away from God's ordinances or commandments. The charge brought was that they "are gone away from mine ordinances." They had not kept God's laws or ordinances. God's plea to them was "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts." A call to return is a call to repent.

You do not need a Hebrew scholar to give you a word study of verse seven. How could it be any plainer? Israel had wandered astray. Israel had turned to her own way. Instead of doing things God's way Israel did as she pleased. This did not please God!

Israel knew what was right. Israel had a knowledge of God's laws. They did not need a new revelation. They simply needed a prophet or spokesman for God to call them back to doing or observing what they knew was the right way to walk.

Malachi's mighty message was: "Return."

Malachi then raised the point: "But ye said, Wherein shall we return?" Note what follows.

II. The Concern of Robbing. Vs. 8-9

God through the prophet Malachi stated the beginning of the route of returning to the Redeemer. Israel had

become a nation of robbers. They were not pirates on the sea, pillagers of banks, gang members who robbed the weak and underprivileged. They were not wanted by the FBI. They were not jewel thieves or drug dealers or street robbers. They were not involved in the mafia. But they were robbers!!

Malachi asked a simple question, "Will a man rob God?" Then God asked a second question, "Wherein have we robbed thee?" Then in verse eight the Lord answered His questions: "In tithes and offerings."

Robbing in our society is a serious crime. Our laws in the U.S.A. protect the rights of individuals to own property and possessions. When a person steals something that belongs to someone else this is called robbery and a felony is committed. Punishment and/or restitution result. The punishment should fit the crime committed.

The tithe belongs to the Lord. It is His by proclamation, priority, plan and purpose. The tithe is "holy" **(cf. Leviticus 27:30ff.)** unto the Lord. It is to be set apart for God's use to provide for the support of religious ministry, programs, and activities.

When someone spends the special or holy one-tenth of his or her income then he or she is taking or appropriating something that belongs to someone else. That someone else is God Almighty. Spending the tithe on ourselves is robbing from God.

The real "zinger" is found in verse nine. "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even the whole nation." A national sin had been committed; thus the entire nation was the recipient of God's mighty, serious, searing, stinging wrath. God was stirred up!

God spoke as seriously here as anywhere in the entire Bible. He did not approach this sin in a calm, cool, collected, mild-mannered approach. He did not say, "I have a little matter to discuss with you. You've made a small miscue and mistake." God stated that Israel was under a curse -- God's curse no less!! What a serious indictment! God's grand jury had declared the verdict. Who wants to be under God's curse?

III. The Call to Receiving. v. 10

Having pointed out Israel's need to return, Malachi proceeded to state the blessings and reiterate God's promises to the tither.

Verse ten begins with the command, "Bring". God did not say to do this if it is handy or convenient. We are to bring all the tithe to the Lord. He wants the total, complete tithe, not ten percent of our "take home" pay but of our entire income. God wants us to tithe the figure on our W-2 form. Don't rationalize. Instead, return all the tithe to the Lord.

Where do we take the tithe? Into the "storehouse", to provide spiritual meat in God's house. "Mine" house in verse ten means to the believer the local church where one is a member. This point could be argued. Some sincere Christians give to several Christian causes with "their" tithe. I can only state my conviction. I solidly believe the tithe is to go the local church where one holds membership and giving to other Christian causes constitutes the offerings. This passage teaches tithes AND offerings, does it not?

In this verse God said if you prove me then I will "pour" to you. Remember God has great, great capacity.

He is the Source of all blessings. He states in this verse that his pouring out of blessings will be so enormous and overwhelming until our cup cannot contain all of it. Our cup of blessings, providence, provision and produce will explode! How much will God bless the tither? "...There shall not be room enough to receive it."

This is the call to **receiving**! Which would you prefer? God's curses upon you in verse nine or God's blessings upon you in verse ten? Count me in on verse ten. I want, crave, yearn for, desire, and covet the blessings of God upon my life! Amen!

IV. The Case of Rebuking. v. 11

Blessings for the tither spill over into verse eleven. Verse ten satisfies me completely. But God states that there is more. God will **rebuke** the devourer. Satan is earth's devourer. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour **(I Peter 5:8)**.

Malachi 3:11 gives the promise that the Lord will help in the production of Israel's fruit trees and grapevines. Prosperity is predicted. God will simply bless the efforts and labors of the tither. God did not promise that all tithers will become millionaires or wealthy. God stated that He would bless honest labor. The money of the tither will go farther. God will put our material possessions into His "stretcher" and stretch it so that it will go farther than otherwise. Don't you believe that nine-tenths with God's blessings will go farther than ten-tenths without His blessings? I do.

V. The Cause of Rewarding. v. 12

Verses ten and eleven tell of the blessings, results and rewards to the individual who tithes. But there are more rewards. The entire nation will reap certain rewards. **"And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts."** Since the entire nation had sinned and had been placed under God's curse, national repentance and return will result in national gain and blessing. Israel was a covenant people. Theirs was a special relationship. From this nation would come the promised Messiah.

Israel had a great obligation to God to fulfill their part of the Abrahamic Covenant by having faith and obedience to the Lord God of Israel. Israel was instructed to be followers of faith in Jehovah. Having done this Israel was to receive special blessings from God. Through a faithful walk with God then the result would be that theirs would be a "delightsome land", the envy of other nations.

VI. The Certainty of Remembering. vs. 16-18

Israel, after having followed God in faith, love, loyalty and obedience would be placed in God's "book of remembrance" **(v. 16)**. This must be a special, special book! Could this be the Lamb's "book of life" as mentioned in **Revelation 20:12,15**?

In **Malachi 3:16** there were two qualifications for those whose names would be recorded in God's "book of remembrance":

1. "them that feared the Lord"
2. those "that thought upon his name"

Returning to God and repenting of sin meant being remembered of God. Once I heard a great sermon on the

text of **Genesis 8:1: "And God remembered Noah"**. Isn't it great to be remembered by the Lord?

Please note in **Malachi 3:17: "And they shall be mine"**. When we walk with God we are His children; we are His own possession. There is a great hymn which states, "Now I belong to Jesus; Jesus belongs to me; not for the years of time alone, but for eternity." Yes, we belong to Jesus. We are His.

Further in **3:17** God states that we are his **"jewels."** God has treasures everywhere. He has treasures on the earth, under the earth, in the seas and oceans and under the oceans. But His greatest treasure is the redeemed of the Lord. Believers in Christ comprise God's jewel box, his most prized treasure.

Lastly, in **verse 17** God stated that He would **"spare them."** A remnant of the faithful would be spared eternal death and destruction.

Verse 18 finishes this great chapter. His plea in **verse 7** was for Israel to return to God and His commandments. In **verse 18** God stated, **"Then shall ye return."** Israel had gone full circle: faith, sin, rebellion, repentance and returning to the walk of faith.

They returned to the regarding of God's righteousness. They returned to full accountability to God. They returned to being able to distinguish between right and wrong. Would you believe that we live in a nation today which evidently cannot distinguish between what God calls righteousness and wickedness? Perhaps we know what is right; we just don't care anymore.

CONCLUSION:

The easiest commandment for each of us should be the one regarding the tithe. We need to make sure that we give joyfully out of hearts overflowing with love and gratitude to a loving, faithful God. When we give in the right spirit with the right motive and the right amount, then God bestows His favor and blessing. Sometimes I may not know if I have prayed enough or read God's word enough or witnessed enough. However, I always know when I have given enough. First I tithe. This needs no prayer. I know my earnings and I know how to move the figures one decimal point to the left. This is quite easy. After I tithe the fun begins. Then I pray and pray and pray, "Lord, how much will I give in offerings?" This requires real prayer. My great inspiration in giving comes from the late R. G. LeTourneau, who said, "The real question is not how much of my money am I going to give the Lord; the real question is how much of God's money am I going to keep for myself?"

In summary the tithe is only the beginning point in Christian giving. The tithe antedated the law. It was incorporated as a part of the Mosaic law and it was endorsed by Jesus **(cf. Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42)** making it a part of the new covenant under grace. Tithe, then do much, much more!!

Chapter Seventeen

"THREE GREAT SACRIFICES"

Text: Hebrews 13:15-16

The book of Hebrews presents the majesty, greatness and superiority of Christ. The writer of this great book argues the preeminence of Christ over Judaism. Undoubtedly some Christians in the first century were at the point of leaving their Christian faith and returning to the Jewish belief and traditions of their heritage.

The writer attests that Christ is far superior to the angels, Moses, the Levitical priesthood and everything found in the Old Testament. Christ is pictured as the great, supreme, unique, august sacrifice or atonement for our sin debt; Christ is the "once for all" sacrifice. He is the sacrifice and sacrificer as well. Christ's sacrifice offered in the heavenly sanctuary is far superior to the numerous animal sacrifices on various Jewish holy and festival days. The person and work of Christ is portrayed beautifully in this book. The great chapter is eleven whereby the writer presents the great chapter on faith.

In light of the greatness of Christ we need to offer to our blessed Saviour and Lord three great sacrifices. Before we offer these three sacrifices we need to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to Christ in total surrender to carrying out His will for our lives. After salvation and total surrender we need to offer three great sacrifices to Christ.

I. We should offer to Christ the Sacrifice of Praise. v.15

Verse 15 states that our sacrifice of praise should be that the fruit of our lips acknowledges the name of Jesus.

God inhabits the praise of His people. The one thing of which God cannot get too much is praise. Psalms is a book of praise to the Lord. We praise God for His mighty works, wonderful grace, bountiful provision for our needs and His continual presence.

The praise list is endless. We praise Him for opportunities of service.

We praise God for prayer, the fact that we can come directly into His presence and put our petitions before Him.

We praise Him for all His benefits and beneficence to each of us.

Yes, we offer to the Lord the great sacrifice of praise. The great hymn writer, Fanny J. Crosby, states, "Praise Him, praise Him; Jesus our blessed Redeemer, Sing, O Earth, His wonderful love proclaim."

Fanny J. Crosby further states, "Praise Him! praise Him! tell of His excellent greatness; Praise Him! praise Him! ever in joyful song!"

II. Next we should offer unto God the Sacrifice of Good Works. Hebrews 13:16a.

Matthew 5:16, states, **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven."**

Note the words of Jesus in **Matthew 5:16**. The key thoughts are light, shine, good works, glorify, and Father. Why have a light if it does not shine? Light dispels darkness. The believers' light is to shine so

brightly that others will see our good works. The motivation for our good works is that the Father might be glorified.

In this same setting as part of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, **"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20)**. The Christian is known by his fruits or good works. In **John 15** Jesus stated that as believers we are to bring forth fruit **(John 15:2a,4)**, more fruit **(John 15:2b)** and much fruit **(John 15:5,8)**. We are pruned, chastened and purified in order that we may produce fruit or goods works for the Master.

The greatest verse indicating that the walk of the Christian is the walk of good works is found in **Ephesians 2:10**. The Christian has been **"created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10)**. In order words we have as our primary aim in our Christian pilgrimage to produce good works in order that God may be glorified through our lives.

Saving faith is never alone. Saving faith will inevitably produce good works. Good works, therefore, are the fruit, evidence or by-product of our salvation. Just like an apple tree inescapably will produce apples the Christian "tree" inevitably will produce good works.

Our influence should be such that we "provoke others unto good works" **(cf. Hebrews 10:24)**.

Peter gave a catalogue of the good works of those who are the **"partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4)**. The capstone of our Christian experience is faith. But what are we to add to our faith? **"...add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience;**

and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness "charity" (2 Peter 1:5-7). A better translation for charity of course is "love".

Please look at **Galatians 5:22-23** where Paul lists "the fruit of the Spirit". These are also the by-products of our Christian experience. These "fruits" could be categorized as good works.

Thus we are to offer to Almighty God not only the sacrifice of praise but also the sacrifice of good works. God is definitely pleased with these sacrifices. But please note that our text lists one more sacrifice.

III. Next we should offer unto God the sacrifice of Generosity. Hebrews 13:16b.

The **KJV** translates the third sacrifice "to communicate". The Greek word is **"Koinoneo"** meaning "to share with others" or "to make one's self a sharer". Several of the translations give the words of "share", "be generous" or "be liberal." This is the correct idea.

Thus we add to the great sacrifices of praise and good works the sacrifice of sharing or generosity. A sacrifice is something offered up to God. The Source of generosity is God; the spirit of generosity is from God; and stimulation for generosity emanates from God himself.

The opposite of generosity is selfishness or stinginess. Could anyone sincerely offer up unto God their stinginess? What would God do with it? This is not what He wants from His children. He wants to save us from the sins of greed and selfishness.

Since a sacrifice is a gift offered up to Almighty God why not offer up to him a generous spirit? The widow who gave her two mites was a generous giver. Mary of Bethany was abundantly generous when she gave the precious ointment to anoint Jesus for burial. Barnabas gave a piece of property in the early chapters of the Book of Acts as the spirit of sharing permeated the early church **(cf. Acts 6:36-37)**. The Christian religion is a giving religion. **"For God so loved that He gave." "Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17). "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15).**

What did Christ say about the sacrifice of generosity? We are told **"to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35)**. Recently I gave one of my grandsons a used automobile. I remarked that Christ taught us that **"it is more blessed to give than to receive"**. I told him what a joy it was to give him the car. He replied, "Granddad, it may be more blessed to give than receive but receiving suits me just fine." I told him it was a blessing to receive. There is nothing wrong with receiving. I told him not to overlook the little word "more". Who gets the greater blessing? Of course the giver always does rather than the receiver. Christian maturity leads to the emphasis being on giving!

CONCLUSION:

Here in these two small verses we have three great thoughts, principles, ideas, maxims or "sacrifices".

Will you give to Almighty God the sacrifice of praise?

Will you give to Almighty God the sacrifice of good works?

Will you give to Almighty God the sacrifice of sharing or generosity?

What will be the end result of offering these three sacrifices unto the Lord? The answer is found in the last part of verse sixteen: "...for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Just as God the Father was well pleased with his only begotten Son's baptism and stated, **"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17)**; likewise God is "well pleased" with us when we offer up to Him these three great sacrifices!! Amen!!

God the Father evokes praise from all believers;

God the Son enlists good work from all His children;

God the Holy Spirit entreats generosity from all saints.

Praise is the upward look toward God.

Good works give the outward look toward others.

Generosity provides the inward look giving us the desire to look beyond self to a needy world.

"STEWARDSHIP PITHY STATEMENTS"

By
L. H. Coleman

- God will give to you that with which He can trust you.

- In the matter of giving some people say, "When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain."

- You will never be happy or productive in your Christian walk until and unless you get the money question settled: Whose is it? How did I earn it? How do I feel about it? What will I do with it?

- The use of our money is a key to our character.

- Money in itself is neither moral nor immoral; it is amoral.

- Money is not the root of all evil; the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. **(cf. 1 Timothy 6:10)**

- The way we spend our money is an index to our character. Persons are known by the company they keep, the jokes they tell, the books they read, but also by what they do with their wealth. Take a look at your checkbook, the checks you have written. This is an index to your priorities in life.

- We are in the sowing business; God is in the reaping business. He and He alone decides how we reap when we give sacrificially.

- An extravagant, outrageous giver was Mary of Bethany.

- Usually the last thing we place under the lordship of Christ is our pocketbook.

- Real discipleship always includes faithful stewardship.

- If God can get it through you He'll be certain to get it to you.

- You can't outgive God; He has a bigger shovel. He can shovel it in faster than we can shovel it out.

- When God guides, He provides.

- The tithe is the Lord's; the offering is His also. Never say "God's tithe and my offering." The offering belongs to the Lord also. He owns everything. All of it is His.

- The tithe is a great starting place but never a good stopping place in giving.

- You must take advantage of the opportunity of a lifetime within the lifetime of the opportunity.

- The priesthood of every believer begins with the assumption that the believer is under the lordship of Christ.

- Pastoral authority begins and ends with accountability to God.

- Money is a good servant but a poor master.

- "He is no fool who gives what he can't keep to gain what he can't lose." -Author Unknown

- The most ticklish nerve in the human anatomy is the one which leads to the pocketbook.

- There are many ways God can bless you; financial blessing is only one of many of God's blessings.

- The problems of a tither are seldom financial.

- Nine-tenths can go farther than ten-tenths.

- The tithe is not God's way to pay the bills of His church; it is His way to grow His children and save them from the sins of greed, selfishness, materialism and covetousness.

- God brought you to the kingdom "for such a time as this". Thus he had confidence in you, believing that you would act positively and do the big thing for God in this Capital Stewardship Program.

- To withhold God's tithe is robbery, being a God-robber. You have taken something which belongs to someone else.

- $ENDING THE GOSPEL; ENDING THE GOSPEL. The difference is money.

- The subject Jesus dealt with more than any other was eternal life; the subject He dealt with secondly in importance was the stewardship of material possessions.

- The only things you take with you are those things that you give away.

- We need in our Christian walk to do all we can, work hard as we can, give all we can WHILE we can.

- We can give without loving but we cannot love without giving.

- Never be a bootlegger of God's promises.

- Paradoxes in the Christian life:
  - You live by dying
  - You are exalted by being humble
  - You get high by being low
  - You win or gain by losing
  - You get by giving
  - You take with you only what you give away

- Once an unbeliever left the church having heard a stewardship message. He replied upon leaving, "All I ever hear at that church is Give, Give, Give." He's right, the Christian religion is a giving religion. **"For God so loved, that He gave." (John 3:16)**

- God's work is being held back today because we have failed to educate our congregations in the matter of Christian stewardship.

- In too many churches today they have over-built and are under-financed. This creates a crisis ministry which is poor or unwise stewardship.

- Whatever your church program requires it requires finances.
- The only thing two Christians can agree on is what the third one ought to give.
- An informed Christian is a giving Christian.
- The reason some church leaders do not have the money they need to operate their churches adequately is simply that they do not ask for it. In life you don't get anything you don't ask for.
- Stewardship involves more than money; it involves the totality of life itself.
- Some folks have chicken religion -- cheap, cheap, cheap.
- In a Capital Stewardship Program walk lightly as you "tip toe" through the tithers.
- We sing "not a mite would I withhold", then withhold that and more.
- Usually in church business meetings those who speak up the loudest in how the church's money is to be spent, give the least.
- Appointing a finance committee chairperson who is not a tither is like asking a wolf to stand guard over your chicken house.

- The church's wheels fail to turn when the bank balance turns red.

- The real question is not, "How much of my money am I going to give to the Lord?" but, "How much of God's money am I planning to keep for myself?" R. G. LeTourneau

- Yes, some folks may leave the church following an effective Capital Stewardship Program. Have you ever noticed when a strong wind comes blowing through the woods, the dead timber always falls off first?

- Almost half the folks in a typical church could leave and you would never know you lost them. Those who gained them, after one month, would never know they had them.

- Those who give their church a dollar a week are not even giving an average tip. Quit "tipping" God and give a tithe to the Christ who gave His all for each of us.

- Church auctions, cake bake sales, candy sales, bazaars, garage sales, etc. cheapen the gospel. It puts the church on the same level with civic groups out in the world. The way to finance church programs and projects is sacrificial offerings.

- Our favorite topic of conversation in the everyday world is money. In the church we talk about it in hushed tones. This is ridiculous. How in the world can you send the gospel into all the world without money? How can you pay the church's light bills without money? How do you do anything without

money? How can you build a new building at your church without money? Therefore, clear you off a good spot behind the pulpit and talk loudly and clearly about money -- God's money.

- While folks fill out their stewardship commitment cards why not play some "giving" music, such as "I Surrender All"?

- After a couple has prayed about their stewardship commitment, if they come up with two different figures, always go with the higher of the two numbers.

- If it is God's will for your church to grow, build and/or expand, God has already provided the resources with which to meet that need; and that is through His people in the congregation.

- Paying our tithe is the rent we pay for living in God's wonderful world, enjoying the air we breathe and God's sunshine.

- Never say, "I can't afford to tithe." We can't afford <u>not</u> to tithe.

- A genuine Capital Stewardship Program is a spiritual renewal program with financial results.

COMMENDATIONS

"Dr. Coleman's sermons are Bible-based and therefore drive hard like a jack-hammer and cut deep like a scalpel. He deals with the most difficult subject a preacher can dare to mention, and does it in a clear and challenging way."

-Reverend Doug Wells, Senior Minister
Asbury United Methodist Church
Madison, Alabama

"I was personally blessed by the content and message of the stewardship sermons. These are very practical and powerful. They put stewardship where it belongs, on a strong Bible base. Actually, the sermons are not about money but about the lordship of Jesus Christ and how material things fall into their proper place. This book will be profitable for anyone who is serious about being a good steward and will provide a wealth of material for those who are teaching the biblical principles of stewardship. They do not teach how to manipulate people into giving but rather on how the scripture motivates us to give."

-Reverend Ken Owen, Pastor
First Assembly Ministries
Greenville, South Carolina

"I found the manuscript to be filled with wonderful sermon starting material. Since I am basically a manuscript preacher, I find your sermons to be more in the area of outline and thought-provoking than to be completed sermons. The greatest gift you have given me is the good exegesis you have provided for the preacher or teacher. The material in the manuscript is excellent for teaching and/or preaching. The occasional stories and illustrations are helpful in highlighting the meaning of scripture. I would recommend this book to any of my colleagues in ministry because I believe stewardship to be a challenge, yet essential for spiritual growth. Most pastors are anxious to find good pulpit helps in the area of stewardship."

-Dr. Terry E. Walton, Senior Minister
Acworth United Methodist Church
Acworth, Georgia

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About the Book

"This book of stewardship sermons is long overdue. I have [illegible] Coleman deliver to congregations a number of these messages and can testify to the fact that they will "preach". This practical book of sermons will be a great help to the wise pastor who preaches on stewardship at least once a quarter. In short, this is the finest collection of stewardship messages that I have ever read."

-Dr. James W. Gilley, President
Arkansas-Louisiana Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists
Shreveport, Louisiana

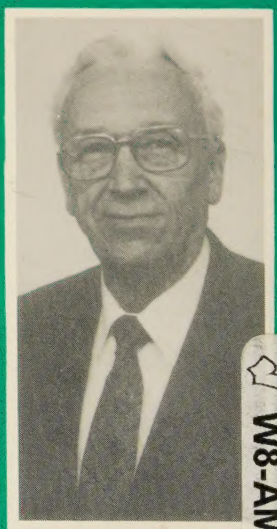
"A pastor's friend - that's L. H. Coleman. And in this book, he is a pastor's helper. When it's time to preach on stewardship, you will find enough in these pages to keep you going for quite awhile. The messages are biblical, substantive, varied, challenging, and relevant."

-Dr. Robert L. Thune, Senior Minister
Christ Community Church
Omaha, Nebraska

"You've written some fine sermons here which doubtless will become a valuable resource to many preachers, myself included."

-Dr. Enoch Booth, Pastor
First Baptist Church
Gainesville, Florida

About the Author...



Dr. L. H. Coleman, a native of Nashville, Tennessee, is President of Coleman Stewardship Services, Inc., Fort Worth, Texas 76118 where he has served since 1987. He has been in the church stewardship field as a consultant and vice president since 1979. He served as a pastor for twenty-five years prior to going into the work of stewardship evangelism. Prior to this he taught Bible at Memphis State University for more than seven years.

He holds the A. B. degree from Cumberland University (graduated at age 19) and the Bachelor of Divinity and Doctor of Theology degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas with a major in Church History.

He has written three books and traveled in 60 countries (11 trips to the Holy Land).

He is married to the former Anne Marie Chamberlin of Nashville, Tennesse[illegible] They have two children: Carolyn (Mrs. Joe Hedgecock) of Bedford, Texas and Pa[illegible] (an M.D. of Pathology in Nashville, Tennessee).

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